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Faith and Sight

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ESSAYS ON THE RELATION OF AGNOSTICISM TO THEOLOGY

BY

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O thou that after toil and storm
Mayst seem to have reached a purer air,
Whose faith hath centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith thro' form is pure as thine,
Her hands are quicker unto good:
O, sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine!

See thou, that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type.

IN MEMORIAM, xxxiii.

FAITH AND SIGHT

I

PRESENT THEOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

ALTHOUGH one does not need very keen insight to discern that theological conditions to-day are much confused, that the time is one of unrest, nevertheless one could not truthfully call it an age of unbelief. The name of Jesus is still the mightiest force to inspire men and women to self-sacrifice and helpful devotion; the spirit of the martyrs of belief may not be ours, but the spirit of martyrdom for Jesus is still among us. There may be few who would go to the stake for their theological opinions; there are many who live for their

religious principles, though at the cost of much of life's comfort. There is to-day, as never before, a spirit of devotion to the Christian ideal, to practical Christian living, a spirit of martyrdom to the cause of helpfulness. Lives are being sacrificed in long devotion, by going down into the slums and out into the waste places, seeking the lost with an energy and persistence, an entire self-sacrifice, all the more praiseworthy that the glamour of the martyr's death is lacking. Philip the Second of Spain tried to devise some way of executing the condemned Protestants in the Netherlands with all the torture of the auto da fe, but in secret, in order to take away the glory of martyrdom, and its influence upon the bystanders. There is no crown on the head of a modern martyr. But for genuine religion, true sacrifice of self in the interests of helpfulness for Christ's sake, there has never been an age like this.

It is not, then, a time of irreligion; reli-

gion is deeper and more pervasive than in the past. There is less reverence perhaps for the church ceremonies, but more heart worship; less respect paid to the cloth, but more veneration given to the man who is indeed a prophet of the truth; less regard given to the acts of synods and assemblies, but more respect paid to the truth when they declare it. The very fact that some earnest men and women are standing aloof from organized Christianity may be a sign of hope, not a token of failure. Professor Bruce has noted that there is a large number of thoughtful men and women who are "kept out of the church by their exceptional moral earnestness." All of this means that the Protestant Reformation is having its fruition; it is the foreshadowing of a better time, when all religion shall be on that basis of spirit and truth, upon which the Great Founder of Christianity said it must rest.

But with this intense moral earnestness

there is an undoubted vagueness and looseness in matters distinctively theological. It is a mental uncertainty, rather than a moral or a spiritual. A man who is faithfully and successfully working as a Christian minister, preaching and living in such a manner that he is a distinct influence for Christ and Christianity, lately confessed, "My theology is conspicuous for its absence, and, when present, chiefly characterized by confusion." There are many who could subscribe heartily to that confession of faith. Some of those who hold the old theology, who profess that it satisfies their minds, profess it with such determination and emphasis that suspicion is inevitably aroused, and we find ourselves murmuring, "Methinks the brother doth protest too much." They are so sensitive to attack that one cannot avoid the thought that their footing must be insecure. The days when men could adopt a creed like the Westminster Con-

fession of Faith, with an absolute certainty that it was the very truth of God, are gone forever; it is not strange if gone too is the power of conviction, which wins the heart and steadies the mind of the hearer. There are a few pulpits where the old theology is preached strongly and with sincerity; the results show that the power of old days is still present. But the mass of men who, in despair of anything else, are clinging to the old systems, professing their belief in them, when all that forces from them such a profession is a determination not to be left without theology, a terror of embarking on the sea of denial, show by their powerlessness, their inability to inspire men with Christian faith or life, how little of real conviction there is in their minds.

Nor is the case much better with what is known as the New Theology. Who can say what the new theology is? It is a sympathy rather than an intellectual

product, a state of mind rather than a logical system of thought. Where it goes at all beyond a mere criticism of the old system, a pointing out of its faults and a protest against them, it is at best but a collection of fragments of belief. The old systems have at least the advantage of definiteness; the new ideas have fervor, light, life, but they are as yet unsystematized.

The leaders of thought in the church are not agreed in their estimate of this theological uncertainty. All must acknowledge its presence; there is a wide diversity of opinion as to its cause and meaning. At the one extreme stand those who tell us, with sadness, that it is a falling away from the "faith once delivered to the saints;" they appeal to us to return from the strange gods after which we have gone, to the old ways, which are so much better than the new. They regard the present unrest and in-

definiteness among those who think on theological questions as a great misfortune, due to the fact that the minds of men have been led away from the truth by the seductive influence of evolutionary and naturalistic theories. The only remedy, the only safety, is a return to the old doctrines, in their old statements. They point to what has been done under the influence of those old doctrines, and urge that all we need is to believe them as heartily as did the men of the past to meet with the same success. They do not see that they are calling for a dead man to arise and fight as he did when the vigor of life was in his veins. Only once has the ruse succeeded of putting a dead hero on horseback at the head of his men, and that was but a temporary triumph.

A return to the old theology would be utterly useless unless we could at the same time return to the old conviction of its absoluteness. Required or formal

assent to a confession of faith "for substance of doctrine" cannot secure definiteness of theology; it must be either elastic or meaningless. It is increasingly evident that the times when the old confessions accurately voiced the convictions of living men are past. No confession of faith can be thoroughly satisfactory unless it can be held enthusiastically and without apology. No one who appreciates at all the progress the human mind has made in this century can believe that there can be found, in the old confessions of three centuries ago, a statement of belief which the mind of to-day can adopt enthusiastically and without apology or explanation.

At the other extreme are a strong party of progressive, leading men, who rejoice in this condition of theological uncertainty as a thing good in itself. To their minds it is a hopeless task to try to express in words the real faith of the church.

Every creed is a hindrance. There never will be in the future the interest in theology which the past has shown. The Reformation went but half-way, in that it broke with one dogmatic system only to set up many others. The church is better off without theology; religion is stronger when apart from creed. The great realities of the religious life are such that they cannot be expressed in terms of human reasoning.

But it is evident that these men are extremists. True theology must always be a part of man's philosophy. The present time of uncertainty has every indication of being, not a final state, but the interval between an old system gradually outgrown and a new system being gradually evolved. It cannot be maintained on grounds of reason or of history, that vagueness and looseness of theology are healthy conditions of religious life and growth. Creeds are the clothing of faith.

A cast-iron creed may crush out the life; but that is no reason for throwing off the clothing entirely. If left to itself to develop, true faith will always take expression in logical form, and will gradually assume a shape which will substantially express the belief of the age. The indications are that we are about to witness a great theological revival, when faith shall no longer hide away ashamed of her nakedness yet unable to wear the outgrown clothes of past ages, when she shall hear the voice of God and come forth arrayed in words worthy to be her garments.

There is another party which is seeking to modify the old forms so that they will be acceptable to present-day thinkers. To take the old words and fill them with a new meaning, to take the old doctrinal statements and remodel them to fit the faith of to-day, is their task. Dr. Stearns's "Present Day Theology" is such

an endeavor.[1] The movement for revision in the Presbyterian Church was in the interests of such a restatement, such a remodification of the old creeds as should make them acceptable to the mind of to-day. So far as it goes, such an attempt is well enough. But it goes a very little way indeed. The student who makes any approach to a right conception of the advance of the human intellect in the few years immediately past cannot help feeling that such theologians are engaged in a futile work. Their labors can be no more acceptable than would be the attempts to alter the grotesque maps of the ancients to suit modern knowledge of geography, nor more successful than the endeavor to patch up a mediæval castle as a protection against modern thirteen-inch guns. To read new meanings into the old words is unsatisfactory.

[1] "Present Day Theology," by Lewis French Stearns. New York, 1893.

The old doctrinal statements are splendid wholes. To change words and phrases here and there is like the process which the Master described, that of putting a new patch on an old garment; it makes the robe hardly more serviceable, and destroys the dignity of age.

What is needed, then, is no cramping back of faith into the old forms, no rigid confining of the expanding life in the body that once was its willing instrument, no modelling and patching of old formulas to make a scanty and ill-fitting garment for the faith of the present day. What is needed is a thorough and philosophical examination of the grounds of theology and its function, in order that theology may be placed where it shall be unassailable as a recognized science. What is the proper function of theology, its relation to science and to the religious instinct? What is the primary basis of theology, that on which it ultimately rests?

These questions must be answered before we can solve the great practical problem, What must theology be to express the faith of to-day?

It is in the hope of stimulating the investigation of such questions and throwing a little light upon these fundamental matters that these essays are written.

II

THE PHENOMENON OF AGNOSTICISM

WHEN one considers at all carefully or sympathetically the religious thought of to-day, he finds his attention arrested by the prevalence of agnosticism. There are many who avow it as their all-sufficient creed; many more who, while holding to some of the old beliefs, profess themselves agnostic in regard to other doctrines; and some indeed who largely unsuspected yield to a touch of this prevailing temper. Even in the church there are not a few who, dealing with doctrines which were held most confidently by their fathers, perhaps as self-evident truths, are content to say, or reluctantly forced to admit, that they do not know. The ten-

dency of the day is to distrust all pure dogma.

Agnosticism has largely taken the place of old forms of unbelief and antagonism to orthodox Christianity. Where once the unbeliever was proud of the name of atheist, and boldly expressed his conviction that there is no God, now he avows his lack of conviction, at the same time insisting that no one knows. It is a gain that unbelief has taken this more sincere and less disagreeably dogmatic position. There is no great gulf fixed between the church and the agnostic, as there was between the church and the atheist. Yet it may be that there is more danger in the agnostic than in the atheist, just because he is less pronounced. The times when a great spirit could write himself down Percy Bysshe Shelley, Atheist, and feel a pride in the title, are gone. A thoughtful man would feel ashamed of such a name now. This change tends to

throw the burden of proof more fully upon the man of faith. If one says to me, There is no God, it is perfectly legitimate for me to ask, How do you know? and to insist upon proof. But if he says to me, I do not know, it forces upon me the task of proving to him the positive truth if I would do anything for him at all; while the one who says, No one can know, rules out all argument and proof, and places himself out of my reach, settles the whole question offhand.

As at other junctures in her history, the church has been slow to comprehend that the foe has changed front, that she must meet a new problem; still the apologist gives his attention to the materialist, the infidel, the atheist, like a battery wasting its ammunition. Henry Ward Beecher tells us that his dog once saw a woodchuck run into a hole in the fence; and whenever after they passed that spot, the dog would bark furiously at the hole,

though the woodchuck had long since disappeared. Many theologians have spent the greater part of their energy barking at the hole where the unbeliever once lived, unconscious that he is looking out at them, with much amusement and some contempt, from his new quarters farther on. The agnostic is the one for the church to grapple with to-day. He is invading her territory, making her members drift away, unsettling their minds. The question, *How do you know?* is an insidious one, for it is a righteous one. And the men and women whom the church has taught "This is false, and that is true," without telling them *how they are to know*, are by that teaching exposed to assault and capture by agnosticism. The missionaries in Japan complain that the Japanese are becoming agnostic in crowds. What can we expect when the missionaries are trained in volumes of theological theories framed to suit the science of two hundred years ago, licensed

by a body which insists on conformity to these theories, sent out with a book knowledge, not with a rational explanation of the facts of science as known to-day?

Agnosticism takes many forms. Now it is intensely aggressive, as in the writings of Professor Huxley, delighting to ridicule the anthropomorphisms of the current theology; asking questions that are hard to answer; with an element of the cruelty of thoughtlessness, and sometimes the cruelty of malice. Again it is coolly and calmly scientific, as in the writings of Professor Tyndall, Herbert Spencer, and Charles Darwin, not trying to demolish theology, not treating it as an enemy, but gently setting it one side as useless, outgrown, interesting but unprofitable, dismissing the theologians with a few words and a wave of the hand, as a set of people worthy of no more attention from the philosopher than a child can expect to receive when he brings the products of his crude imagina-

tion to the great scientist. Or, in still more cases, it is of the type seen clearly in Matthew Arnold's or Clough's poetry, where there is an earnest desire to keep all the old faith that can be retained, a lament for the days when men could believe, a cry for a lost Father, a wild wish that we might cling to faith, though the mind says it is a hopeless desire.

It is a practical question, How shall the Church treat the agnostics? How shall she regard them? Shall she look on them as altogether wrong, enemies of the truth? If she does, if she insists on classifying them with the infidels of past days, she will do them a great injustice and herself a great injury. There are many of them attending the church services, many of them strongly interested in the practical outworking of Christianity, some of them deeply in sympathy with spiritual work and worship. Shall she brand them as enemies? There are many instances where

people who have been driven away from the church by an uncompromising theology have come to be among the best workers of the church when she has turned from speculative denunciation to practical good work for humanity. Shall these be considered as enemies?

There are leaders in the church who take this attitude. They denounce and unmercifully attack the agnostic as a foe to Christianity. When he asks, How can I know? they say, Take the Word of God for it; and when he asks further, How can I know if it be the Word of God? they fall upon him, or give him up as hopeless. I have in mind a prominent man engaged in evangelistic work who said once, "I can do nothing for a man until he believes that the Bible is God's Word." He was shutting out from the sphere of his influence many souls, among them the most thoughtful and promising. He was making a test which the Master he professed

to serve never did make or could have made.

But it is seen more and more that the policy of attack is not the true one, that the mission of the church is to save the lost, and that one may be lost in helplessness and darkness no less than in sin. There are increasingly, therefore, those who feel a profound sympathy for the agnostic, and a desire to lead him to the light. They see that it is not a crime to say, I do not know; that often true doubt is a stepping-stone to true faith; that "there lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds." They recognize the danger there is in agnosticism to the church and to Christian character; they long to overcome it; they try to deal with it patiently, and to cure it.

But, after all, must not the church go much further even than this? She must deal with the question, *Is not agnosticism*,

after all, a form of theology? She must ask, What does this movement mean, that expresses the unbelieving temper of our time? Must it not be more than a mere negation? Why is it that such earnestness often goes with it? Why is it that so many whose ideals are lofty, true, and strong, whose life matches their ideals closely, are out of touch with the church and theology, and are content to say, on the great matters of faith, "I do not know"? Is it possible that agnosticism has any contribution to make to theology, any lesson to teach the men of faith and of creed?

Until the church comprehends that the agnostic has a contribution to make to theology, that his appearance is a new evidence that the spirit of truth is guiding the mind of man, that he is a link in the process of theological evolution, she has not begun to appreciate his position or importance; nor can she, until that time,

meet him successfully. He is not an enemy; he is one who attempts to make a theology that will stand the tests of to-day; and the theologian must take him into partnership so far at least as to see the causes of his appearance, and from these to modify the existing theological system.

To understand the phenomenon of agnosticism as related to theology, it is necessary, by an examination of the foundations of theology, to determine its sources and its nature.

III

THE SCIENTIFIC FUNCTION OF THEOLOGY

THE true function of theology may be thus stated: so to interpret the facts which science discloses as to afford a rational basis for the religious instinct. This function is twofold, or at least may be viewed under two aspects, as the providing of a rational basis for the religious instinct, and as giving a spiritual interpretation to the facts which science discloses. Every system which has appealed to truly religious minds, and won their approval, will be found, on examination, to have as its end, avowed or unconscious, one or the other of these objects. Either it is an attempt to account for the world as the science of the time estimates it, or it

is an effort to state truths which the mind can accept as a satisfactory reason for the exercise of the instinctive religious impulse of the heart. Most systems combine the two, though one of them is apt to predominate.

There have been theologies which have made but little effort to discharge either part of this twofold function. But just for that reason, though they may have delighted logicians, they have failed to win the assent of earnest religious thinkers. Every successful theology — that is, every theology that has won the mind and heart of its age — has taken the facts disclosed by the science of the time, and interpreted them so as to afford a mental resting-place for the religious nature. Here we find also the reason for the decay of theological systems. Every advance in understanding the religious instinct of man, every important step taken in the progress of science, makes obsolete a part

of the theology previously held, or opens new doors previously locked, and lays on the students of that subject the burden of making a new adjustment.

It is obvious that in each part of her work, theology is meeting a need, is dealing with proper subjects of investigation and classification; that nowhere more than in harmonizing science and the religious instinct is she more truly performing her proper work. Each of the two is an important element in human life.

The religious instinct must be acknowledged to be an actual element of human nature. The investigation of it is necessary. To ignore the religious instinct is unworthy of any scientist. To ignore the part it has played and is playing is impossible for the historian or the student of sociology. One of the significant facts about Mr. Benjamin Kidd's "Social Evolution" is that it is an attempt, by a thorough-going evolutionist, to define the

function of religion in society. It cannot be questioned that this instinct is one of the most powerful affections of the human mind. There may be controversy over the way it originated, whether it has been developed, or is an original endowment of man; there can be none over its reality and power all through the known life of the race. To trace the influence of religion is to trace the history of mankind. The lowest tribes have felt the impulse to worship, to seek a power higher than themselves; sacrifices have been offered in every known land; the smoke has ascended from countless altars in a ceaseless stream; men have prayed, confessed, implored help, bowed in adoration, in every land and time.

And, with advancing civilization, has come a deepening and strengthening of this instinct. It is of deep meaning to the student of society and its progress, to note that the great advances which man

has made have been marked by intense religious feeling. It may be an open question whether the religious feeling has been the cause, but it is simple matter of history that with the advance in civilization has always gone an intensity of religious feeling.

It would be manifestly aside from the purpose of these essays to attempt to trace the parallel development of civilization and religion. It would be impossible without devoting volumes to it. Yet a glance here and there along the line of man's development shows the truth of the proposition that the advance of the race has been accompanied by a deepening of the religious instinct.

Passing over the ancient civilizations, as to which it might be maintained with much reason that the strongest development was when religion was firmest, and the greatest decay when the systems on which the exercise of the religious instinct was based had

been rejected by the mind of the age, — passing these, and coming to the times that have a more direct connection with our own life, we note first the sudden change which marks the new era. It is not only religion, it is civilization, which starts anew at the point where present chronology begins. Religion there receives the mightiest impulse that has ever been given it, through Jesus of Nazareth and His followers. Jesus appears, with His startlingly new theological conceptions, His new view of God, His new conception of man and of the world in its moral and spiritual relations, His refreshing freedom from artificial restrictions, His new emphasis on conduct and on character as an inward state, His "sweet reasonableness," His power to inspire men with a passionate devotion to Himself. Paul follows, with his energy that carries the new impulse of love far and wide: his independence that leads him undaunted

to face the bitter prejudice of the Jews, the indifference of the Romans, the cool speculative temper of the Greeks; his tendency to theological statement, modified and sweetened by a poetic temperament that keeps him from pushing his doctrines to the logical extremes to which they will be carried by later disciples. Men have wearied of the old systems which, when framed, had been acceptable as explanations of the facts then known, but now are seen to be irrational and irreligious. They eagerly take the new statement of truth, and spite of imperial edicts, persecutions, and lack of resources, religion grows.

But who will say that the impulse given to the cause of religion by Jesus and His followers was greater than the impulse given to civilization? What a change we find in man's condition and outlook as we come from the old era to the new! We feel a difference even in the first few

years. Human life is still a barren field, as before the coming of Jesus, but the one field shows the bareness of exhaustion; the crop has been reaped; the harvest is past: the other, though bare, is full of rich seeds of promise; the harvest is there in germ. In the words of Jesus, in the teachings of the great Christian writers, and in the gradual outworking of the basal principles of the religion of Christ, is found the reason for all the advance of the race in true civilization. As Mr. Kidd says, in speaking of the development of western civilization,[1] "the motive force which has been behind this development has its seat in that fund of altruistic feeling with which our race has become equipped; and this fund of altruistic feeling has been the chief product of the religious system associated with our civilization."

Glance at the mighty movement called indifferently the Reformation or the Re-

[1] "Social Evolution," New York, 1894, p. 243.

naissance. The fact meets us there, beyond possibility of dispute, that a quickening, freeing, and deepening of the religious instinct goes hand in hand with a rapid advance in civilization. It may be argued with equal plausibility that the religious instinct was the cause, or that the intellectual awakening was responsible for the quickening of the religious instinct; we are not now concerned with this; for in either case the quickened religious instinct and the forward leap of civilization go together.

Through all the struggles of the free spirit of the people against the despotic temper of the middle ages, religion played a prominent part. Religious freedom was the great object sought. It was for that that Holland fought, sacrificed, almost laid down her life; it was for that that Hampden, Pym, Cromwell, waged their immortal war; it was for that that the Pilgrims became voluntary exiles. It may be objected

that the instinct of self-interest played a large part; that the Netherlands were comparatively quiet so long as religion alone was involved, and rose in organized revolt only when Alva laid the iniquitous tax of the tenth penny; that what aroused the wrath of the English middle classes was not religious intolerance, but the imposition of the illegal ship-money tax. But proof is not wanting that the deepest impulse in the struggle for popular freedom was not the wish to protect the pocket, but the determination to exercise the religious instinct freely and rationally. When the struggle was at its height in the Netherlands, when Holland was nearly crushed and Spain almost exhausted, Philip proposed a peace in which all was granted but the religious demands; Motley tells us that only two persons from the whole of the Netherlands provinces availed themselves of the offer.

No student of history can doubt that the

religious instinct is one of the most vital and powerful of the impulses to human action. To ignore it is unscientific, and vitiates any conclusions with regard to human life and society.

It is also evident that this instinct must have rational grounds for its exercise, or it will become mere superstition, weak or fanatical. History affords many instances of the weakness of religion when unsupported by the reason, and of the fearful destructiveness of the religious instinct when it becomes a mania. The worst crimes have been committed under the impulse of religion divorced from reason. An irrational faith has no sure influence toward moral conduct; nothing is more savage than a nature in which religion is a passion uncontrolled by reason. It is only when the mind and heart work together, when the man feels that in his worship, his adoration of a higher power, he is acting reasonably, obeying a powerful

natural impulse which it is a pleasure to gratify, and at the same time acting in harmony with the reasoned conclusions of the intellect, — it is only then that he can be satisfied and safe; free from superstition, free from fanaticism, having in his religion a vital force that makes for personal morality.

It is the true function of theology to afford such a rational basis for the religious instinct; to give man a reason for his worship, or at least to satisfy his mind with a conviction that its exercise is not irrational. There is a philosophical truth in the words "he that cometh to God must believe that he is." The heart cannot find satisfaction in worship if the mind is in revolt. One decisive test of the value and authority of any system of theology is its ability to do this work, its power to convince a thoughtful man, a thoughtful age, that the exercise of the religious instinct is a rational act, and to point out a rational

method of gratifying this impulse. Theology should be an aid to religion, not a dependent upon it. When a theological system fails to commend itself to the mind, yet is reluctantly "held," it may well be questioned whether its presence is not a greater harm to religion than an utter absence of theology would be. A wall may be valuable as a protection, but if the wall must be propped and held to keep it from falling on us, we would far better be without it.

The other great part of the function of theology is to give a spiritual interpretation to the facts disclosed by science.

Man found himself at the dawn of human consciousness, as he finds himself to-day, in the midst of a universe of facts and forces. What do they mean? — has always been the question thrust at him for answer. What is this life of ours? What is the secret of clouds and winds, of thunder and whirlwind, of birth, growth, and death?

What is the explanation of all that goes to make up the world of phenomena which the senses apprehend? What is the meaning of the facts of life in the moral sphere; sorrow and joy, evil and goodness, pain and pleasure, what do they mean? Such questions have come to men at all times, in all stages of the development of the race. The answers to them have been theologies.

It is not easy for us, who stand with long centuries of philosophical training back of us, to understand how the first theology sprang out of the necessity, in the mind of the early thinker, of finding the meaning of the facts of life. We do not always see that the student of science, who, after observing and classifying natural phenomena, goes on to form a theory to account for them, is a theologian. Yet a part of the real value of theology is here. And no theology can be truly satisfactory to a thoughtful mind which does

not afford an explanation, an interpretation, of the facts which meet that mind in life. No system, however logical, ingenious, or pleasing, can afford a mental resting-place, unless it be felt that it is founded on a knowledge and appreciation of the facts which science discloses. A theology which teaches that the world was made in six days may be acceptable so long as science has learned nothing of the length of the period in which the earth took shape; but when science learns and teaches the fact that great periods passed before the earth assumed its present shape, the six-day theory must drop out of theology, or the theology will be rejected by the thoughtful. Whenever science ascertains any fact about the world in which man finds himself, she presents theology with a new datum to be considered; and theology must consider that fact or be discredited.

It is especially necessary to-day that

this relation of theology to science should be thoroughly appreciated; that it should be understood that when the scientist insists that the theologian shall take account in his system of newly discovered facts or principles in science, he is merely exercising his right, not in any sense intruding in a sphere which does not belong to him; and that an acquiescence in that demand is not a yielding a point of grace and goodwill, but is a surrender to the indisputable demand of truth. So long as there is one great truth, fact, or principle, clearly established by science, which cannot be reconciled with a theological system, that system is imperfect and in danger. The question for which men seek an answer from the theologian is not how there may be constructed an imaginary universe, or how there may be framed a theory of life that can be defended more or less successfully against the facts of life: the great thing is to account for this life and

its facts in such a way that faith and hope may exercise themselves, in such a way that the spiritual shall not be crowded out of life.

Here, then, are the two principal sources of theology. Man finds himself endowed with an instinct of reverence and worship, an intuition of a higher power; he finds himself in a world of light and shade, of forces and facts. He tries to find and state the reasons for exercising his religious nature; the result is a theology. He attempts to account for the world about him; the result is a theology. The complete theology would be the one which should combine the two parts into one, and provide a system of thought which should be in one a basis for religion and an explanation of life.

Mr. Herbert Spencer accounts for all theology as originating from the phenomena of dreams, growing through a belief in ghosts of dead ancestors to a belief

in gods. His theory is as ingenious as Rousseau's "Social Contract," and he marshals his proofs with great skill, so great that he can express a complacent surprise that the theologians are not utterly refuted and convinced by the array of evidence.

It must be confessed, however, that upon some students the impression left after considering Mr. Spencer's position and the proofs advanced to sustain it, is that they are wholly inadequate to account for so marvellous a growth as religion. The ghost theory may be sufficient to account for the formal part of theology, but the religious nature of man must be presupposed, before there could have been any such development as has come. Unless the human mind felt the need of an explanation of the facts of life, unless the instinct to reverence or fear some superior power existed, there would be no way of accounting for the process of identifying the

ghosts of dead ancestors with the powers of nature. Mr. Spencer shows that such identification took place in some instances, but the most natural reason for such identification is the perception by the mind of man of a superior power in nature, and a desire to bring his nature into relation with that power. By whatever theory, then, we may attempt to account for the development of theology, there must be assumed as primary essentials to the process a sense of something great without, something to be accounted for; and an instinct leading the mind of man to seek some relationship with that great something.

IV

THE TWO GREAT TYPES OF THEOLOGY

It has just been said that a complete and satisfactory theology would fulfil both of the functions which, we have seen, belong to this science, would be at once an interpretation of life as science discloses it, and a rational basis for the exercise of the religious instinct. But as a matter of fact, few theological systems have been thoroughly satisfactory or complete; in all, one element or the other has predominated. The founder of the system has started in his work with one object or the other before him; and as a consequence the twofold function of theology has tended to produce two distinct classes of theology, the one being mainly an interpretation of

the facts of the world as shown by science, the other an attempt to provide a reasonable or reasoned basis for worship. We may call these two great types of theology *Objective* and *Subjective*.

We have already indicated the source of each of them. When the first man who thought began to demand a reason for the world in which he found himself, when from what the senses revealed to him he drew deductions and made explanations to satisfy his mind, an objective theology began. As knowledge grew, with it grew the chance for a theology ever more true to nature; as man learned to see and hear more accurately, as the mind pushed back further through and past the realm of phenomena into that of the laws that govern phenomena, objective theology assumed more and more of a place, at least in possibility. The scientist of to-day, who, after observing and classifying natural phenomena, from them deduces opinions and

theories to account for them, is framing an objective theology. He might reject the title of theologian with scorn; yet he is engaged in much the same work as that which is being done by the man who is proud of the title.

So when man first began to look within to see the laws of his own nature, the principles of its operation, to study the workings of this mysterious instinct that impelled him toward morality and worship, a subjective theology was begun. And as man learned more and more of his own nature, as the mind expanded and advanced, as generalizations were made more accurately and from more data, subjective theology grew; man formulated systems springing from the thought, "Such and such propositions must be true to account for this instinct, the presence and importance of which cannot be doubted." So the two forms of theology had their origin.

Of course it is not meant that these two kinds of theology have sprung up independently of each other. On the contrary, they have always been most intimately connected. But in almost all systems, the one or the other type has predominated.

At this point the question may very likely arise in many minds, "But is there not a basis for theology more definite and formal than either of those given? Are we called upon to throw over altogether that on which all Christian theology professes to be based; namely, revelation as contained in the sacred books of the Hebrews? Must not Christian theologians always base their systems on the Bible? As a matter of fact, have not all Christian systems of dogma rested, or professed to rest, on the Word of God? Does not this show that there is a third source, which can be classed neither as objective nor as subjective, more authoritative than either of those mentioned?"

In answering this, much care is necessary, and great delicacy. Above all, care must be exercised by author and reader alike to keep clear in the mind the end we are seeking, which is, to find the *scientific basis* of theology. One's personal faith, be it definite and strong as may be, is not such evidence as science accepts as final. The Christian believer may, if wise he will, rest his theology entirely on the Bible; the scientist must probe deeper and demand to know on what the acceptance of the Bible rests; he must dig till he finds a *rational* ground for theology. No doubt, as we think of theology in its present state, the basis of it is found in revelation. The church claims to have written documents, coming from God through men directly inspired, and her theology is to be but an interpretation of these documents. Christian theology, then, must rest on the Bible, or on the church's interpretation of the Bible.

That position is correct for the Christian theologian, and is the one assumed by most, if not all, the religious philosophers of Christendom to-day. The student who starts with the assumption that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that his business is to draw from it inferences and statements of truth, and so to make a system of theological teaching, is certainly engaged in a great and important work, and will produce a Christian theology. And yet one who believes most heartily in the inspiration of the Bible, and its all-sufficiency as a rule of faith and life, can readily see that in searching for the *scientific basis* of theology, for that on which it ultimately rests, one must go deeper than the word of the church, or a book generally accepted as inspired. Men have largely outgrown the feeling that the word of the church is final. We rejoice that they have. The Reformation began with vigor the process of asking,

"Why?" with respect to all dogmatic statements the church ventured to make. The simple question was enough to take all value from many great structures of dogma which could not make out a clear title to the ground on which they were built. The process has gone on until all men realize that all authority is subject to question. Theologians show their perception of this fact in that, even when they found their systems most wholly upon scriptural truth, they insert a chapter in which they give the proofs of the inspired authority of the Scriptures.

If one investigates calmly and impartially the reason for taking the Bible as a basis for theology, he will see that it rests on one of the two principles which we have found to be the basis of true theology. Surely any one can see that if theology is to be a science, it must rest on facts which science admits, and must be founded on those facts logically. When the Christian

believer offers his creed to the scientist, and the latter says, "What does this rest on?" he is asking a perfectly legitimate question. If the believer says, "On the Bible," he must not object to the further question, "But why should I accept this book? There are other documents making claim to be the inspired Word of God. How shall I be sure that this is in truth the all-sufficient rule of faith and a satisfactory basis for theology?" If the answer is given that this book is authenticated by the fact that it is from the hands of inspired men, the natural and rightful reply is that that simply pushes the problem a step further back, and comes dangerously near to reasoning in a circle, for all we know of the authors is from the books. Granted the inspiration of the authors, the authority of the books is evident; granted the inspiration of the books, and that of the authors is manifest; but what reason is there for granting either

proposition? Whatever outward proofs are given must be tried by scientific tests before the scientist can accept them, and *it is of the very nature of Christianity that its external evidences will not stand such tests.* The believer may say, "Take the book and read it for yourself, and see if you do not judge that it is indeed the Word of God. The Spirit of God will convince you of it as you read." But still the scientific mind must relentlessly push the matter further and further back, asking, "What is it that convinces as one reads? What in this book bears out the claim made for it?" And when he reaches the end of the pursuit, he will see that this book is indeed the basis of all true theology (if he admits this at all) *because it is true to the nature of man,* meets his highest needs, satisfies his religious instinct. *It offers an explanation of the facts of life, which at the same time affords a rational basis for the exercise of the religious instinct.*

It is a remarkable fact that, even in the dawn of free thought, our fathers saw so clearly the scientific basis of the belief in inspiration. The modern reliance on "inerrant original manuscripts" is a sign that conservative theology has degenerated, not advanced, as compared with the type found in the Westminster Fathers. They took pains to state as their belief that the Scriptures rest, for their authority, not on the word of any man or church, but on themselves, and on God their author. They commend themselves because they so wonderfully harmonize with the instincts and intuitions of human nature. There are those, of course, who hold that the Bible should be taken blindly, without reason, on the ground of its claim to be the Word of God. But it needs no argument to show the inadequacy of such a position as a starting-point for a science. If theology is to be a science at all, it must take no claims for granted, but must

investigate all. If any be fearful that the position we take here (that the authority of the Bible rests not on its claims, but on its faithfulness to human nature and its instincts and traits) will invalidate the authority of the sacred writings, we may say to such, paraphrasing Paul's famous question, "Do we make void the authority of the word? Nay, we establish it." If God would give a revelation to men, it must harmonize with human nature, and especially with the religious instinct in it, or it must go counter to it. If it be unintelligible, it cannot commend itself to a rational creature; if in its fundamental principles it go counter to his natural instinct, if it do violence to the principles of his nature, it must be rejected, whatever its apparent outward sanction may be. The only reasonable object of a revelation would be to give man knowledge, not of matters unrelated to his life, but of the truth with regard to himself, the

world, and life, and the unseen ruler of them. Nothing then could accredit as true a revelation which did violence to the facts of life and the religious nature of man; no evidence could prove the authority of a revelation as could its essential harmony with man's nature. Transcend man's intellect and knowledge it may; it must, to be of value as a revelation. But even in its transcendent parts, it will be in line with the best instincts of human nature, and in that lies the *scientific* evidence of its authority.

The theology which is deduced from the Scriptures is largely, therefore, of the type we have referred to under the name of *subjective theology*. So far as the teachings of the Scriptures relate to the facts of life, they may form a basis for objective theological teaching; but for the most part, and for almost the whole of that which may be called revelation, the truths of the Scriptures are founded

on the primary moral and spiritual instincts of man, and hence are properly sources of subjective theology. And this is true whether we account for the Scriptures on a naturalistic or supernaturalistic theory. For a revelation to be of use, for it to be intelligible, it must be made in terms of human nature, must be clothed in the conceptions and forms of reasoning that characterize man's ordinary thinking, and must be made in a form that harmonizes with man's deepest religious instincts; in that harmony will be found the only scientific proof of its truthfulness and authority, the only scientific reason for accepting it as authoritative. But even if it should be held by some that the Bible so transcends the nature of man that its teachings cannot be included under the classification of subjective theology, as that part of the philosophy of life which is derived from the facts of man's religious and moral nature; that it is an objective

revelation, resting on proofs external and internal, which are satisfying to their minds; even so, it must still be evident to them that the theology which is derived from, and rests on, the Scriptures is truly a part of subjective theology, resting on the facts of the nature of man.

For every one admits that Christian theology is deduced from the Bible, not worked out in it. It shows us the Scriptural truth as the theologians apprehend it; and their view of it must be determined absolutely by the limitations and conditions of their intellect. Grant that the Bible may be whatever can be claimed for it, inerrant, divinely inspired to the point of being mechanical, an objective revelation that is final, and still the theology that is deduced from it is not the pure truth, but the truth as apprehended by fallible human intellects; only that part of it can be put in the form of a theology which harmonizes with the nature of man.

And therefore Scriptural theology is but a subjective theology, even though we confess our belief that the Bible is truly an inspired revelation, because it throws such light on man's nature, and on the meaning and value of the religious instinct, as comes from no other source.

It is seen therefore that, whether for natural or revealed theology, whether one believes in the inspiration of the Bible or not, the original sources of theology are those given above, — the objective source afforded by science, the study of the world about us; and the subjective source, the knowledge of the religious instinct, the study of man's true inner nature; the two things which Kant said filled him with a perpetual wonder, "the starry universe without, and the moral law within." The Hebrew Scriptures may be the supreme light on either or both of these; the Christian theologian believes that in the Bible, as nowhere else, is revealed

the truth about the religious instinct of human nature, in a way that shows that the revelation comes from a higher power than human understanding. Yet, while acknowledging thus the supreme authority of the Scriptures, he sees, if he takes a fair view of it, that they rest for proof of their authority on the religious and moral intuitions of human nature, and that the scientific basis of theology can be no other than the facts of science and the facts of the religious and moral nature of man.

It is an interesting question, and one that may with some confidence be answered in the affirmative, whether the long and bitter fight known as the " Conflict between Religion and Science " is not in reality a warfare between the two types of theology, objective and subjective. It has been repeatedly pointed out that religion and science have no controversy. Religion has no reason for objecting to the state-

ments of fact which science makes; it is when those statements of fact have been formulated into a theory to account for life that religion finds herself in conflict with science. Nor has science in herself any inherent antagonism to religion. But when the religious instinct creates a theory to account for itself and that theory meets a different theory founded on the facts of life as science has ascertained them, then comes the clash. It is only natural that this conflict should have gone on strongly, bitterly, through the past ages. Objective theology on the one hand, and subjective theology on the other, had much to learn. Starting from different premises, working in different fields, yet, after all, striving for the same end, it is easy to see why they have come into conflict. Each has felt that the truth was with her, but each has failed to see that part of the truth was on the other side. Is it too much to hope that now we are coming to a period

when men will see that the two must work together, when the subjective theologian will see that, if theology is to be a science, it must submit to scientific tests, and the objective theologian will see that a theory of life as it appears to the senses is not all that is needed for a true philosophy of being, that there are other tests of reality than anatomical and chemical analysis; that mental and spiritual phenomena are as genuine and valuable as physical; and that an indispensable source of a true philosophy of being is in the moral and spiritual nature of man, and in the Book which is the highest expression of that nature?

V

HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF THE TWO TYPES

If we allow our minds to take a hasty review of the past ages of thought, it may surprise us to see how the subjective type of theology has dominated Christian thinking. In fact, it has had almost exclusive possession of the field, and has jealously guarded its place, refusing to let the deductions of objective theology play any large part in modifying its conclusions.

This, however, no longer appears strange when we recall the fact that there has been little or no accurate science of things, founded on exact observation and classification of phenomena, until recent days. Men have always studied nature and life, but until late years the tendency to go to

that study with preconceived notions was too strong for the student to overcome. One of the surest marks that the child has grown into the man is the giving way of prejudice to reason in his thought and conduct: the race has been long in outgrowing its childhood.

So it has come to pass that the foundation of almost all the theology man has known has been the thoughts and speculations of men. The inquiry has been, not always, What is truth? but often, What do we think to be the truth? or, How can I make my conjectures appear to be the truth?

It would be unprofitable to comment upon those dreary pages of history on which are recorded the opposition of theologians to new light, the persecutions of Galileo and Bruno, the hardships of Abelard. They all show plainly the struggle which objective theology had to find a foothold; the struggle indicates the ab-

solute rule of the subjective type, and its consequent reluctance to share its authority. A thoughtful man, in conversation with the author some years ago, used a striking simile. He said that to him the realm of thought seemed to be composed of a circle of light, surrounded by a zone shading through half-light to darkness. The circle represented ascertained fact, the domain of science; the zone speculation, the domain of dogma. At first the central light was very small, and the realm of dogma correspondingly large. But with each advance of knowledge, science pushed out the boundaries a little further, lessening the sphere of influence of speculation by so much as she increased her own territory. The theologians, natural guardians of the realm of dogma, have been inclined to resist every advance made into their domain, and very often the inclination has become determined action.

Through this past predominance of subjective theology it has come about that the theological systems which are held to-day, for want of better, having come down to us from the long ago, are strongly subjective in nature.

In nothing does the subjective basis of present theology appear more strongly than in the individualistic character of it. It is interesting yet melancholy to take up the books most used in divinity schools now, and see how the theology in them is narrowed to the individual life. A social theology is hardly conceived of in them. Salvation is individual; the relation of Christ to man is a relation between individuals; and men are united only in Adam that they may be condemned for a sin they have not committed. All the great doctrines are presented as they relate to the separate life. Current theology practically adopts the view that a man's religious life is a matter wholly between

himself and God. A race problem, a world redemption, hardly comes within their ken; and even the kingdom of God, that grand social organism of which the teachings of Jesus are so full, is in ordinary theology but a collection of individuals, each in relation to the king. Such theologies cannot satisfy the mind of the present, filled as it is with the great truth of evolution. The ideas of *unity* and *development*, the fundamental principles of the doctrine of evolution, demand a theology which shall be for the race, as well as for the individuals of it; which shall explain the life, source, and destiny of *man*, as well as of *men*. This involves a change in subjective theology, in the direction of social study, and teachings to fit the life of man as a whole; but still more does it make necessary a theology objective in its source and character, at least in part.

We see that, all through the ages, men

have begun with their religious instincts and intuitions; from them they have constructed their systems of philosophy, and assumed that these must be also an adequate explanation of life. Dim conjectures that more was necessary to make a system that should correspond with reality, vague doubts of the all-sufficiency of the dogmatic explanations of life, meet us all through the course of thought's history. The Book of Job, for example, is a protest, by one who has been examining the facts of life with unprejudiced eye and mind, against the prevalent explanation of life founded on a priori reasoning. Subjective theology, starting from the premise, God is just, and reasoning that therefore He rewards the good and punishes the bad, had imposed on all its theory of the absolute certainty of prosperity for the good man and adversity for the bad. But a man comes who looks at life for himself, and he sees that the facts do

not square with that theory, and so he writes this great book. Elsewhere also we find such protests from clear-eyed students of life, protests against the absoluteness of the theories founded only on study of man's religious instincts. Yet these protests are the exception, few in number, and generally feeble in expression. Almost all are satisfied to accept the deliverances of human consciousness as final, to consider subjective theology the adequate explanation of life.

The child, and the man of immature mind, say, "Whatever the facts say, it must be *so;* I feel it; I am sure of it." The mature mind says, "Let me see what really is, and then, if possible, find how I came to think it must be different." The human race was a child, thought as a child, felt as a child; and consequently it made its theories and said, "It must be so," twisting the facts to fit the systems.

But the time of maturity came; a man appeared who said to his fellows, "Come, let us look at things as they are, find out what they are, bring them together, and test our impressions, thoughts, and beliefs by what we find to be fact;" and Francis Bacon started the new method of study. Since his time his followers have gone on investigating nature, finding out facts and truths, until we are in possession of knowledge which, though obtained in a few centuries, dwarfs all the learning of the former ages.

And thus the demand has arisen for an objective theology, a theory of life to account for, or at least to be in harmony with, the facts of science. Vast results like these should make vast changes in all studies. Mr. Fiske is quite within the truth when he says that the principle of evolution is "fast obliging us to revise our opinions on all subjects whatsoever." The word "universe" expresses a far greater

conception to the ordinary scientist of to-day than it could mean to the greatest minds of a century ago. Inductive study has revealed not only its infinite extent, but its no less infinite *intent*, its intricacy, complexity, fathomless depth. The human mind has begun to appreciate what life is, or, to speak more accurately, has found how far beyond all words and thoughts are the wonders of life, of existence, as the mind investigates them. How can a thoughtful man study these great facts of life, see the marvellous beauty and richness of them, and not ask, What is the explanation of them? What do they mean? In the old days he would have gone to the theologian, and obtained from him a theory with which to account for the facts of life. But the mature mind of the scientist asks, Is it not better to go to the facts themselves, and from them form a theory, an explanation? Thus the demand arises for an *objective theology*, a

theory of life, and of God the reality behind life, founded on the facts which scientific study reveals. Our own century has seen this demand growing in intensity, and has seen efforts to meet it.

Now, agnosticism, — what is it but the answer to this demand, given by the scientist as the result of his study of the facts? It is an objective theology, a theory which has arisen as men have studied the facts of existence and have felt the need of an explanation of them. What does the agnostic give as the explanation of life? He says, that all the phenomena of the universe are the manifestations of an "infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed," to use Mr. Spencer's definition; or "the eternal not ourselves which makes for righteousness," to take Mr. Arnold's more spiritual conception. He says that this Power so far transcends our nature and its conditions of thought that we can form no adequate

conception of it. He denies that we can know, can ever find, the explanation of this mystery of existence. It is there; it is a *reality;* we can study its workings, but we cannot define it.

Now this is without doubt or question a form of theology. It deals with the same subject as that with which the theologian deals. What is its basis? Obviously the facts of science. The scientific mind has come to see that the universe is unbounded, that the mind can discern and appreciate but the merest fragment of it, that man is but the dust in the balance when compared with the universe and the Power manifested in it; and from this it constructs a theory of life and the Power revealed or concealed in life. That theory is agnosticism, which, whether true or false, whether an enemy or a friend to the church, has appeared in a legitimate way, as a system of thought founded on one of the two great sources of all theology.

Being in reality founded on the facts which science reveals, it follows that if it is a rational explanation of them, it must have some value, and it deserves to be met with respect.

VI

THE TASK OF THE THEOLOGIAN OF TO-DAY

It follows that the task for the Christian thinker who desires to overcome unbelief and bring the mind of the age to a practical faith in Christianity is conciliatory and harmonizing rather than antagonistic and destructive. His work is to find how this new theology, founded on the facts which scientific study of life reveals, may be brought into vital and rational connection with the subjective theology which, so far, has had the field almost exclusively to itself. He must look at the agnostic, at least at the thoughtful and reverential agnostic, such as Spencer or Arnold, not as a foe, but as a co-worker; a co-worker who claims different results, no

doubt, from his own, but one whose claims are to be examined with care and courtesy. If two chemists are examining the same substance, and each forms a different idea of its nature from his analysis, it is the height of folly for each to insist on his own result, and ignore or ridicule the other. The Christian theologian and the agnostic theologian are working at the same problem; if their results differ, they should say to each other, "Come, let us examine the steps by which we have reached the result, and see what is the cause of the discrepancy."

It is just here that difficulty arises. Each class is suspicious of the other, and unwilling to grant that part of the truth may be on the other side. Agnosticism has arisen as a protest against the dogmatism of subjective theology. It asserts that the facts revealed by science must be considered and interpreted if theology is to be valid, and so far the position

taken is a healthy and a strong one. But there is great danger of a dogmatism in the other direction, — a danger that the agnostic will accept his conclusions, formed from the scientific study of phenomena, as sufficient in themselves, and disregard the conclusions of subjective theology based on the thoughts and intuitions of man's mind. The subjective theologian insists that the conclusions which come from a study of man's nature shall not be disregarded, and so far he is right. But when he further insists that these are enough in themselves, and that they should be accepted as final, whatever science may say, he is unjustifiably dogmatizing. Such dogmatizing on both sides tends to postpone that reconciliation, that honest search for a real harmony, which is the great thing to be desired.

The questions for the subjective theologian to answer, in meeting the agnostic, are, How far is agnosticism actually

founded on the facts of life as science reveals them? and, What relation does or should it sustain to theology as at present stated? The agnostic, for his part, however confident of his theory of life, must consider that Christianity meets the deepest needs of man successfully; that a faith without a mental support is dangerous and uncertain; that there is a reality to the spiritual consciousness of man, and its instincts are proper subjects of study; that therefore it is of supreme interest to him and to all men to find a rational basis for a theology that can satisfy the heart and mind and afford a motive for conduct. Each must study the other, and then the way of harmony may be found.

VII

THE TRUTH IN AGNOSTICISM

In attempting to indicate the way of reconciliation between subjective theology and agnosticism, the first step we take is to make a right estimate of the agnostic explanation of the universe. Is it altogether false, or is there truth in it?

The agnostic's position may be fairly stated thus: positively, that there is an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed, and which makes for righteousness; negatively, that no more absolute knowledge can be had of this energy than its existence and its tendency. It denies that we can predicate of it will, intelligence, or emotion; declares, in a word, that while we can know *that* God is, we

never can know *what* God is, for all our means of knowledge fall short. "The well is deep, and we have nothing to draw with."

Is this theory true? We have been so accustomed to look on it as dangerously false, so apt to class the agnostic with the atheist and other downright foes of all religion, that it might shock us to have the answer given, that fundamentally the absolute truth about God, so far as it can be stated, is as the agnostic gives it. And yet that such is now the verdict of common sense, and that such will be the verdict of theology before many years have passed, may be confidently asserted.

If there were presented to us on the one hand the agnostic position about deity, and on the other hand the position of the man who confidently defines the divine nature in all its attributes and acts, who knows the exact order of the divine decrees, can "declare the whole counsel of

God" and classify divinity as accurately and easily as the naturalist classifies a common field flower, and we were asked to say which was the nearer to the absolute truth, should we not be compelled to say that the agnostic's was the better, the more fundamentally true statement? The proofs that it is are easy to find:

1. Every attempt on our part to define God beyond the agnostic conception issues in contradiction and inconsistency.

The usual theological definitions of God may be reduced to the phrase, "Infinite Person." Yet that phrase, when interpreted, means "an unlimited limited." Our theologies expressly state that God has no body, parts, or passions; they then proceed to describe God as angry, or as loving. They declare that He is omniscient, and that there is to Him no past or future, but one eternal present; and then they represent His decrees and His acts as following the one upon the

other; as, for example, the covenant of grace following the covenant of works. We do not always notice these contradictions and inconsistencies, for we have been trained to the point where we can accept two contradictory statements and think they harmonize. When, after stating the fact that God is infinite, we proceed to define and limit His nature, we imagine we avoid the contradiction by putting in a further statement that in spite of these limitations He is infinite. We do not see that that leaves the contradiction there in full force, and that while, on account of our limitations of perception and reasoning, it may be necessary for us to state what we believe about God in two contrary propositions, both of them cannot be scientifically true or capable of scientific proof. The attempt to define the infinite is like the attempt to square the circle.

2. The agnostic position is the one borne out by the facts of science. Every

forward step science takes, brings to her a more profound sense of the fathomless mystery back of all phenomena. It would be utterly impossible for science to start now with the theories and definitions of subjective theology as a working basis, and from them to investigate impartially the facts of life. Let a scientist take the theological definition of God as the absolute truth, and he will quickly find that his task, instead of being to find out and classify things as they are, would be to attempt to reconcile things as they are with a theory of things as they should be according to subjective theology. The agnostic definition of God is the only one which the scientist can use in his work.

3. The agnostic position is the one the Scriptures show to be the fundamental and absolute truth. Throughout the Bible, God is represented as a mystery, undefined and indefinable. The nearest approach to

a definition are the wonderful words of Christ, "God is spirit," and of John, "God is love," and those are rather an interpretation of God than a definition. All through the Bible, we are met with the thought that God cannot be known absolutely. If you seek the absolute truth about God, you find that He is the Unknowable, if you accept the teaching of the Jewish and Christian writings. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" is a query of the Old Testament. "My ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts; for as the heaven is higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." The Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament brings out with great power the inability of man to find out the absolute truth about God. "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" is the cry of Job and of many another. Isaiah is full of lofty thoughts of the mystery of God's nature. The 139th Psalm is as grand a

piece of inspired spiritual agnosticism as has ever been written.

1 O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

7 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

The Book of Job is certainly part of the inspired Word of God, if internal and external evidences have any value. Yet what is that book but the story of a human mind which fights its way from a narrow, dogmatic conception of God to a conviction that God is to be trusted, not understood; that His power and wisdom are indefinable and unsearchable, yet that He must be trusted and obeyed as the "power not ourselves which makes for righteousness"? It is a book which issues in an agnostic theory of life. The hero of it at the outset is an orthodox Jew, accepting the theology of his time in full, with no protests or doubts. He thinks that all of life can be explained, and all problems solved, by the creed of his day. But life begins to educate him. Misfortune comes; life's ploughshare turns up the well-beaten

path of his reasoning, shows him mysteries of God's nature and dealings which confuse him, displaying as they do the entire inadequacy of his conception of God. He feels as if the foundations were disappearing, washed away in a flood of doubt. But "When half gods go, the gods arrive." It is not that his theology has wholly gone, taking with it the sense of God: it is simply that, whereas in past times he felt that all of God's nature and action was simple to him, now he discovers the fact that God is an infinite and eternal mystery; at the end he finds peace and rest and faith again; but how? Not through solving the problems, not through understanding God, not through a more accurate theology. Nature speaks to him and shows him how little he knows. Can he explain the clouds, the winds, the life of the beasts and the plants? Then how can he know God, or understand all His ways? This much he can know, and out of the

wreck of his beliefs he clings to it as the shipwrecked sailor to a spar, that God is the power that makes for righteousness, and his faith speaks out in manly words, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him; I will not let go mine integrity." He bows before the infinite and unknowable and rests in Him.

The Book of Job has been dear to the thoughtful, progressive minds of this age. Victor Hugo esteemed it the greatest of books; Carlyle drew much of his inspiration from it; his "Sartor Resartus" is but a new version of the book of the struggles of the old patriarch. Job is dear to such minds because it is, in its deepest meaning, a reverently agnostic book, which shows the passage of a human mind from an elaborate theology which does not meet the facts to the acceptance of a mystery too great for finite natures to fathom, yet near enough for them to rest in it with all the heart and mind, an infinite and

eternal energy from which all things proceed, a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is agnostic in sentiment. Who can know anything of life? Only practical duty is revealed with any clearness to man. "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man," is "the conclusion of the whole matter." There is a Power not ourselves to reverence, and we can be sure that righteousness is in the line of the purpose of that Power; what else can we know?

When we turn to the later revelation, amid all the wealth of truth and helpfulness which is in it, and which has given the world its mightiest hope and assurance, there is a clear support for the agnostic all through the teaching. Christ's words were full of the thought of the infiniteness of God, His transcendence. Man cannot know Him fully. "No man knoweth

the Father save the Son." "No man hath seen God at any time."

But it is chiefly when we come to the teachings of Paul, the Christian theologian, who systematized the truths of the new religion, that we find support for the statement that according to the Bible agnosticism is fundamentally true. One expression of his is enough to show it: "We walk by faith, not by sight." The importance everywhere given in his writings to faith, or hope, as the ground of Christian knowledge, shows that he does not rest his own Christian thought on any absolute knowledge of God in terms of human reasoning or consciousness; that is, on any scientific knowledge or definition. Nothing is more evident to the reader of Paul's letters than that he bases Christian theology on faith; and nothing is more evident to the thoughtful than that he means by faith something different from knowledge, that the word as often used

to-day in theological teaching is an abuse of Paul's thought. We take up a so-called "Confession of Faith," and what do we find in it? First, a series of definite propositions about the divine nature, which are indeed "taken on faith," not on proof; and then a logical system of deductions from those premises, to be held because of their logical connection. Can any one believe that when the word "faith" is readily applied, as to-day, to a scheme of logic, it is used as Paul conceived it?

But Paul elsewhere indicates that, so far as concerns *knowledge*, truth found by human reasoning, we cannot know God. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" "We are saved by hope." It is by a special power in a transcendent way that we know God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for

them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Christian thought has, wellnigh universally, taken that beautiful sentence as a reference to heaven. It is, as the context clearly shows, a reference to the truths of the Christian religion. They cannot be known by man scientifically; he cannot see them, or hear them, nor can they enter into his reason by any ordinary process; they come through the Spirit of God. Again he tells us, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." What is this but an admission, or, rather, a stalwart assertion, that by scientific process, and as a matter of absolute and exact knowledge, God is unknowable? Surely if the orthodox theologian can appeal confidently to Paul as the founder of the system of truth which he upholds, no less can the agnostic phi-

losopher appeal to him to uphold him in his contention that God is unsearchable by science, that He is an infinite and eternal mystery.

Is not the position of the agnostic legitimate, and should not all, even the strongest Christian theologians, grant it, when he states that all that can be known of God through science is that He is the eternal not ourselves from which all things proceed, and which makes for righteousness? And should not his demand be granted that, in scientific work and study, nothing beyond this definition shall be allowed to influence the result? The first step toward reconciling the church and the agnostics, who, earnestly religious by nature as many of them are, are yet at variance with the church because they cannot grant her assumptions as absolute truth, is a free acknowledgment by Christian theology that the absolute truth is found in the agnostic statement, that it is

in harmony with the position of the sacred writings, and that theology must not dogmatize in the sphere of science, nor insist on the recognition there of anything more than this absolute truth about God. Theology has the right and duty to protest against the dogmatism of science in the religious sphere; science has the equal right and duty to protest against the dogmatism of theology in the scientific study of life. Each can demand of the other no more than the acceptance of that which each must admit to be the only possible statement of the absolute truth about God.

VIII

THE VALIDITY OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC THEOLOGY

THE concession to the agnostic which we pointed out as the duty of the subjective theologian serves to define to some extent the nature and sphere of subjective theology. It might be thought from the trend of the last essay that we were insisting that the case be wholly abandoned to the agnostic, that all attempts to construct a theological system should be given up. If we admit that God is unknowable, save in the undefined acknowledgments of agnostic science, do we not admit also that the systems which attempt to define God further are invalid and useless?

This does not follow. Though we must grant that the fundamental fact, the only absolute knowledge, of deity, is mystery, unfathomableness, this does not shut out all theological speculation or make it untrustworthy; it merely defines its limitations, and warns it off the field of scientific investigation. It takes away its temporal power, so to speak, and restricts it to its own sphere.

Instead of discrediting theology, it shows it its rightful place. There are data to be taken into the account in addition to the great truth of God's unfathomableness. Among these are the fact that man's nature needs and his progress demands a representation of God which shall be trustworthy and intelligible; and the fact that, in all spheres, man is guided, in his thought and action, by symbols; not by the absolute truth, which, in other branches as in theology, is inexpressible, but by the best explanation of that inex-

pressible truth which man's mind can make or recognize.

In any sphere, man finds himself, when he has gone as far as his mind can take him, in the presence of a fathomless mystery. Yet in none of them does he, on that account, despair of knowledge; he seeks the best and truest way of symbolizing the reality, of expressing it in terms that are intelligible to the human understanding. Man finds that certain effects are produced through inconceivable reaches of space, similar to those produced, in the region where experiment is possible, through vibration of material substances. Heat, light, and other manifestations of energy known to be forms of vibration, are transmitted through space with inconceivable rapidity and absolute accuracy. How it can be, man does not know. But he must have a working explanation of it in order to advance in knowledge; hence the hypothesis of the ether, full of

inconsistencies, known to be not the absolute truth, yet the best explanation under the limitations of the human intellect, of an inexpressible truth. So it is of the atomic theory in chemistry. Everywhere man uses symbols. Everywhere he must, while admitting that absolute truth is unattainable, state that truth under the limitations of his understanding. *And he must rely upon that statement.* The agnostic then has no right to demand that the theologian cease trying to state the truth about the divine nature, that he rest content with the naked statement of agnosticism, that he should cease presenting theories for acceptance which go far beyond the agnostic position in preciseness of definition. All he has a right to demand is that the theologian shall not present these as the absolute truth, that he shall acknowledge that they are at best only the nearest that the human mind can come to the perception of the absolute,

that they are but the best statement possible under finite limitations, of a truth which transcends thought and expression; in other words, that they are anthropomorphic.

And the theologian should be ready to accede to this demand. The Bible, on which he professes to found his theological system, expresses the truth about God in characters, in human lives, far more than in propositions. The Scriptures are professedly anthropomorphic. The theologian should not hesitate to admit that he is presenting, in his system, not the absolute truth, but a working statement of it, a working hypothesis on which religion may rest: that is all.

But on the other hand the subjective theologian has something to demand of the agnostic as a right, not as a favor. It is that he shall acknowledge the validity of subjective theology, the necessity for more than the abstract and absolute truth,

the fact that anthropomorphism does not invalidate a system of religion. The agnostic is too ready to assume that because his position is the absolute truth, therefore all theological discussion should stop there. But just as science must go on with working hypotheses, and not stop with the absolute truth of mystery in which every investigation ends, just as human life goes on using forces which are unknown, framing theories of them which cannot be scientifically proved, yet by which they can be put to use, — so the human spirit, needing contact with the divine, made with a need for rest in the Power not ourselves, must have a working hypothesis, that is, a theology; and the fact that this theology, coming through and to finite natures, is not the absolute truth, but only the best symbolic expression of inexpressible truth, does not invalidate it in the least.

Mr. John Fiske has said, with great

truth, "To every sound form of theism an anthropomorphic element is indispensable." The theologian should admit that his system is necessarily anthropomorphic. The scientist should admit that that does not invalidate it in the least as a scientific basis for religion, though it does warn it off the domain of science as an authority.

The religious instinct plays too great a part in the life of the race for us to abandon it. It is necessary to the outworking of the destiny of man. He must worship and reverence the Unseen, must think about God, and endeavor to live according to the will of God. He must symbolize the Great Unknown in a way that will be intelligible. Two courses therefore are open: to interpret the divine mystery in terms of either of the two great classes of being with which he is familiar, matter or spirit. He may regard God as force, and think of Him as like in character to the forces of nature, as im-

personal; or he may regard God as spirit, and conceive of Him as personal, possessing the qualities that distinguish the human spirit.

That the latter is the truer conception and representation is shown by comparing the results. The religions which have represented God under the form of beast life or inanimate nature are lower in value, and less satisfying to man's religious instinct, than anthropomorphic religion. Though, as a matter of absolute knowledge, I cannot judge the character of the Creator from His creatures, yet I can at least say that there must be in Him that which accounts for, is the source of, my nature. If love is in me, and intelligence, and will, then must there be in Him, not necessarily the same qualities, but at least that which will account for them. I have a right — is it too much to say I have the duty? — to think of God under the symbol of the best I know. An

ideal Spirit is the highest conception the human mind can have; if it is to think of God at all, it must be as an ideal Spirit, or as something lower.

It will be obvious from the statements already made, that if the human mind demands an objective theology, and finds it in agnosticism, equally does man's nature demand a subjective theology to satisfy the religious instinct. The evolution of human society makes theology of the subjective type imperatively necessary. If man were content to leave religion an impenetrable mystery, he would lack one of the greatest motives to character.

Mr. Kidd, in his "Social Evolution," has developed with great power this function of religion. He shows how, were it not for the restraining force of the religious faith of man, evolution would not go on; for the reason of man would make him refuse to sacrifice himself for posterity, and progress would cease.

What would happen in the moral and social life of man if faith in immortality, which is a part of pure subjective theology based on faith in the personality of God, were taken away? Some of the greater and loftier minds would still be willing to struggle and to keep themselves pure for the sake of the progress of the race; but would not the impulse of the many be to ask, "What has posterity done for us?" Man may see well enough that the struggle for existence is necessary in the moral and social life of the race; but why should he place the progress of the race above his own success and comfort? He will not unless he is a hero almost beyond our power to conceive, or else is sustained by the faith that he is doing the will of God, for love of One who loves him, in hope of an immortal gain. Any doctrine which is thus necessary to man's progress, must have in it elements of truth, and deserves to

have the best energies of all who care for human progress given to its statement and proof. No lover of man can afford to think lightly of religion, or of theology, the attempt to express religion.

That theology is anthropomorphic is not then a weakness peculiar to theology; it is inevitable; indeed, it is one of those infirmities in which we may rightly glory. The agnostic student knows this at least — it is the supreme teaching that results from all his study of life — that man is the highest of all known forms of existence, and that the spiritual life of man is the noblest part of his being. Evolution has resulted in the development of the human spirit as the crown of her labors, the fruit of her toil. If God is to be interpreted at all, and not left as a dark mystery forever, then the interpretation which is most spiritual, which is least in terms of matter, and most in terms of human intellect, emotion, and will at their

highest reach, is the best interpretation and is therefore valid.

Subjective theology, then, is seen to have a scientific basis. While we admit that the absolute truth is that found in the objective theology of to-day known as agnosticism, we affirm, on the basis of the witness of history and of social study, that man must have, as a condition of his progress, an interpretation of God as of all the unfathomable mysteries of life. This must be in terms of something known. The higher the terms in which the inexpressible is interpreted, the more consistent and trustworthy will be the working theory framed. Nothing is known to man higher, more perfect, than the human spirit; therefore a theology which presents the "eternal not ourselves," in terms of the human spirit, is the best possible interpretation, and is valid in its sphere; an anthropomorphic theology is thus seen to be valid, as the best pos-

sible interpretation of an inexpressible reality.

It is hardly needful to point out that this does not open the door to the lowering and blasphemous statements which would represent deity by the lower elements of human mind; nor does it justify the theology which represents God in terms of man's physical nature. To be valid, it must represent God in terms of the highest and best known. One of the first postulates of the true theologian is the saying of the Quaker poet, "Nothing can be good in Him which evil is in me."

Again, it seems scarcely necessary to indicate that the interpretation of God through subjective theology must change and grow with the better knowledge of human nature, and of the relative excellence of its several attributes. Thus a conception of God which is true for one time may be far from adequate for another age. Mr. Spencer speaks with ap-

proval of Mr. Fiske's characterization of the progress in theology from the grosser representations of deity to the more refined as a "process of deanthropomorphization." Yet is it not evident that, as a matter of fact, theology never can grow less anthropomorphic without becoming either helplessly indefinite, or more gross? Either God must not be represented at all, or He must be interpreted in terms of known existence. If the latter, it must be in terms of the spirit of man or of something lower. No doubt there is such a process as Mr. Fiske and Mr. Spencer indicate, whereby, as man increases in knowledge, his conception of God becomes less gross, more spiritual. Yet that is not a decrease of anthropomorphism, it is an elevating of the conception of deity from a lower to a higher likeness to man, a progress in refinement of anthropomorphism; though it gains in trustworthiness, the representa-

tion loses nothing of its anthropomorphic nature; the change comes about as man learns more and more of the nature and laws of his spirit, and of the transcendent importance of the human mind and will, as compared with any other manifestation of life in the universe.

This process which Mr. Fiske calls "deanthropomorphization," which might more accurately be described as *refinement of anthropomorphism*, has gone on all through the ages, and will go on as man's knowledge increases. Subjective theology waits on psychology for new facts, and it must build on them when they are found. Paul desired for the Colossian Christians that they might "increase in the knowledge of God;" such increase can come only as man sounds more truly the depths of his own soul, and learns what he is at his best.

Mr. Spencer acknowledges the validity of subjective theology, or at least the valid-

ity of anthropomorphism, when he says, pointing back to the long process by which a purer faith has been evolved, that even in the grossest forms of it, "at the outset a germ of truth was contained in the primitive conception, the truth, namely, that the power which manifests itself in consciousness is but a differently conditioned form of the power which manifests itself beyond consciousness."

IX

CHRISTIANITY THE TRUE SUBJECTIVE THEOLOGY

We have seen that human progress demands a subjective theology, a working theory on which moral conduct and spiritual life can be based; we have seen also that such a theology will be valid if it interprets God in terms of human nature, and keeps itself true to the highest conception of man which can be formed on the basis of known facts about his nature and attributes. It would naturally be asked, How far does the great system of theology which is held by most thoughtful minds in civilized lands to-day meet these conditions? In other words, does Christian theology, in its essential features,

meet the demand for a subjective theology which shall be valid scientifically?

Christian theology rests upon the Bible as the written revelation of God, and upon Christ as the personal manifestation of God. The question then is, How far is the representation of God in the Bible and in Christ such that it can be held as the best interpretation of the mystery behind all existence?

Nothing is easier or more popular than to make the statement that the Biblical conception of God is grossly, even physically, anthropomorphic, and therefore discredited; nothing is easier than to select here and there statements and conceptions from the Hebrew sacred writings which represent God as moved and moving in a way which the best ethical conceptions of to-day would condemn in a man. It is not only men like Colonel Ingersoll who so treat the foundations of Christianity: Professor Huxley, and even

Mr. Spencer, deal thus with the Bible, and dismiss the idea of its inspiration with mockery, or cool indifference. Their position seems to be in substance this: either we must take it as literal truth that God, the Infinite Cause of all phenomena, walked with Adam in the garden, commanded Joshua to kill women and children, gave orders to Israel in order that they might be punished for obeying them, and counselled deceit in the case of Samuel, David, and others, or we must reject the whole idea that the Scriptures are an inspired revelation of God.

But it is hard to see how any one accustomed to dealing with great subjects, to taking broad views, can fail to see the deeper and broader conception which, while admitting the imperfections of the earlier revelation, yet holds that the Bible as a whole is the truest written representation to us of the nature of God. We have already seen how clearly the Bible states

the absolute truth that God is unknowable, that He cannot be seen, or found, or searched out. The statement grows more and more clear as the Bible is "slowly writ" that God is far beyond our human ideas and conceptions, and cannot be known through them. This fact has been brought out with great beauty and force by Mr. Arnold in his essay on "Literature and Dogma."

But with this there goes, also with ever-increasing clearness, the statement that man can have assurance, can have knowledge of God which, while not absolute, shall be a working theory of religion. God reveals himself to man. How? In the only way that theology can possibly represent God with consistency and validity, in terms of human life. At the first God is represented as akin to man. "Let us make man in our own image" is the opening thought of revelation. It might have been said, "Let us make God in the

image of man, that man may know Him," for such is the actual process of revelation. God makes Himself known through human lives and human thoughts. He sends men to their own natures to find the picture of the divine. As the thought of the Hebrews develops and is written down, we find in it, from age to age, the very process of "deanthropomorphization" which marks it as true and valid. Yet so far from discrediting the earlier and less spiritual conceptions, their stronger or lower anthropomorphism marks them as consistent and true. To each age the revelation came in the terms of man at his best as that age could comprehend him. The truth "God is Spirit" would have been utterly unintelligible to an age that had not risen to where it could grasp the conception of spirit as the best in man. The best revelation that could be given was an interpretation of God in terms of the best known of human nature, now strength, now

knowledge. No other conception would be intelligible, and Fairbairn's remark is deeply true that "nothing that is unintelligible to the age that receives it will ever become intelligible by mere lapse of time."

At last there comes the supreme revelation of God to man, and how? Not in human thoughts as before, but in a *character*, a *person*. And that person is actually and wholly a *man*. As such he is known, loved, hated, followed, crucified, raised up again; there is no doubt of his being a man among other men, there is nothing to distinguish him from other men, except that he is perfect as no other man has been. Yet here Christian theology makes its fundamental statement that that *man* is the most perfect representation of God, "the express image of His substance." He is, in the philosophical phrase of John, the "Word" of God. Thought is inexpressible; yet man must ever struggle to show his thought to other

minds, and at last there comes forth a word which never expresses the thought wholly, but is the best possible expression of the unknowable thought, and may be used to symbolize the thought, so that other minds may share it. So God, Unknowable, is represented in a Perfect Man, who represents God just because He is the "Highest, holiest Manhood," and in Him we find the Word of God, the final and perfect representation of the infinite mystery.

Christian theology is founded on the propositions that God can be validly represented only in terms of human spirit; that he has been represented by a book in which He is shown as characterized by human feeling, intelligence, and will; that the consummate interpretation of the divine mystery is in a Perfect Man, whom we rightly regard, and worship, and teach as divine, because He is the highest conception of God which can be given to the human spirit under its limitations; that He

is the mediator between God and man, the Word, who shows us in one Person man at his highest possible perfection and God in the utmost possibility of revelation to finite minds.

How far the doctrines which Christian theology has formulated to account for the revelation in the Bible and the revelation in the Human Life can be justified as legitimately anthropomorphic, is a question for the theologians and scientists to work out; it will take long years of thought and struggle to prove it thoroughly. But this much can be confidently claimed by every Christian thinker, that in the great essentials Christian theology is scientifically valid. For it meets a demand which must be met, the demand of man for a working theory for his religious nature; and it meets it in the only way which can have a scientific value, by a spiritual anthropomorphism.

The New Testament itself, the founda-

tion and final authority for all Christian theology, clearly indicates this way of reconciliation between the agnostic and the believer: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, — He hath revealed Him." There we have the reconciling statement, — God is unknowable, unseeable, yet we have a vision of Him which is true as the motive of a religious and moral experience, in the Perfect Man who reveals Him.

X

THE TRUE THEOLOGIANS OF TO-DAY

If the path of harmony pointed out in the last few essays has not been found as yet by some earnest religious natures; if there remain among us many who, boldly or sadly, cling to the new teachings of science and cast faith and creeds away as altogether unprofitable; and many, on the other hand, who care not what science may say, but stake their all on the traditional faith,—it is not for lack of guides to show the way. The thought in these essays has already been given expression in an inspired way in this age. There have been men who have striven to "hold with newer light their reverence for the

old," men of strong intellectual power, and that sympathy for the heart of the race and the thought of the age which one must have to be a leader of men. This way of reconciliation through a spiritual anthropomorphism is clearly shown in their writings. The fact that so few of the adherents of subjective theology and objective theology have found the middle way of harmony is due to the fact that they have gone for guidance, not to the true theologians of the day, but to those who teach a partial theology as if it were the whole. Such are, on the one side, the professional theologians; on the other side, the critics and scientists.

The man in the church, when disturbed in his faith by the new facts which science has disclosed, has naturally turned to those who are the accredited leaders of theological investigation in the church. What has he found in them? Any adequate appreciation of the problems of

present-day thought, any attempt to take the new facts of science and account for them in a theological system? Some of this he has found here and there. Such books as Fairbairn's "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology," or Abbott's "Theology of an Evolutionist," or Newman Smyth's "Christian Ethics," or William Newton Clarke's "Outline of Christian Theology," have done the greatest good in giving a spiritual interpretation to the facts of life as now seen. Yet is it too strong a statement to assert that the work of most of the theological teachers of to-day, who have defended the faith, has been largely or entirely limited to attempts to buttress up the subjective theology of the past against the assaults of science and doubt, or to assail the objective theology calling itself agnosticism? How few are the theological schools which make any serious attempt to reconcile the two branches of theology! Can one be pointed

out which is heartily approved by the church? The subjective theologians have admitted into their teachings some facts presented by science, being forced to do so; but such facts have been permitted to modify their teachings and opinions only in unessential and trifling details.

On the other hand, men have gone to the scientists and critics, and have found there, not attempts to harmonize the two types of theology, but a reliance exclusively upon the objective type, and a throwing over of the theology of faith as useless and out of date. They could not find here any reconciliation between that theology of the mind which man must accept, and that theology of the heart which man needs to give power to his moral and spiritual life. The work of the scientists and critics is of the greatest value. Destructive as it often seems, and sometimes is, it has brought man nearer to the reality which is the basis of all true

faith. But when they reject altogether the subjective theology which has, no doubt, had too exclusive control of the mind of man in the past, when they say that natural science can furnish all the data necessary for a philosophy of being and of conduct, and that such a philosophy is all the religion man needs, they are setting up a dogmatic system quite as tyrannical and quite as harmful as that against which they so earnestly and rightly protest. They are not the guides who can lead the mind of the age from its doubt and uncertainty to a theology which shall be an inspiration to true and noble living. Their work is good in that it elevates the natural life, and brings religion into close touch with ordinary human experience. But no one who fails to see the necessity and validity of subjective theology, the reality and importance of the religious instinct in human nature, the part which faith must play in the drama

of the race, can be a true guide in theological matters.

But while the doubting mind of the age has thus gone to the leaders who, on one side and the other, have contended for the absolute truth of their partial theology, and have denied all possibility of reconciliation, voices have been raised to point out the way of peace and truth. The thought leaders of our age, and those who have caught their inspiration, have been showing, with greater and greater clearness, the way in which reconciliation lies. It is the poets of our day who are its real theologians. They have seen the problem, they have earnestly sought the solution; they have shown the way of harmony. It is they who are the true theologians; for to a keen sight of and strong hold on the facts of science they have added a sense of God and of the reality of personal religion, — that is, personal union and communion with God.

They thus lay one hand on the subjective theology of the past, and the other on the objective theology of the present, and draw them together. They are agnostic, deeply, spiritually, reverentially agnostic, but faith still means much to them; they have the insight to discern what the theologian proper of to-day does not always see, that the agnostic position is profoundly right. They have also the insight to discover that to which the scientist or critic of to-day is apt to be partly or wholly blind, that the religious instinct of man has its own needs to be met, and its own testimony to give. They do not attempt to discredit sight, yet they trust faith as well; and they admit that, in the sphere of subjective theology, we walk by faith, not by sight. Thus they approve themselves our true leaders.

In thus finding our guides among the poets rather than among the professional theologians or the scientists and critics,

we are in line with the whole history of theology's development. The great leaders of human progress in the apprehension of religious truth have been, not the logicians, whether in the sphere of objective theology or subjective, but the inspired men, the prophets, the poets. Conspicuously true is this of the greatest religious nation, the Hebrew race. In watching their religious development, we see that the motive-power of their progress was pre-eminently the prophets. The priests, who held to the theology of the past, were usually a drag on the religious development of the nation. The Talmudists and commentators had, when Jesus came, reduced religion and theology to a thing of rules and reasons, with the natural consequence that the life had left it. It was only when a poet appeared, who taught the truth in an inspired poetic way, that long steps were made in progress. It was not Ezra, or the Chronicler,

or the Talmudists, or the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, who led the Israelites to deeper and purer conceptions of theology, and proved themselves the true guides of the race: it was Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Christ, Paul, all poets. Whenever theology has fallen into the hands of the Talmudists and commentators as its leaders, instead of into the hands of the poets, it has lost power, though it has often gained in precision. Much of the trouble over the Bible, much of the lack of power of Biblical study and teaching, has sprung from the fact that God has, in the Bible, taught us through poets, and we persist in treating them as if they were mathematicians. Those who contend for a literal interpretation of the Scriptures do not see the folly of their position, in that they are contending for a method of interpretation which does not fit poetry.

It is in the work of the poets, then,

that the doubting mind of to-day, knowing the justice of the claims of agnostic science, yet feeling that there is something we still need to retain in the old system of faith, and so hesitating between the two paths of denial and faith, can find help and courage; it is they who point out the solution of the problem, who show the path of peace between objective and subjective theology. They are true to the facts of science as the theologians proper are not; they are also loyal to the facts, needs, and testimony of man's nature as the objective theologians, the critics and scientists, are not. They show that the way of reconciliation is that already indicated, by a spiritual anthropomorphism, by the admission on the part of subjective theology that agnosticism is scientifically true, and the admission by the objective theologian that faith is valid, and that anthropomorphism, so far from discrediting theology, is its proper indorsement.

It is hardly necessary to say that not all the poets of our day thus deserve the title of theological leaders; nor can we say that most of them do. It is not the mere artists, the sweet singers, to whom we refer. It is only those who can be rightly called prophets who thus fulfil the needed duty of guidance. It is those whose art is but the interpretation of life at its deepest, who live close to the heart of their age, catch the thoughts and feelings of mankind, and, through their art, strive to lead those less gifted with insight. Among such present-day prophets, two stand pre-eminent, the great English poets, Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. Of each of them it has been said, by men whose judgment is worthy of all respect, "He is the greatest theologian of the day." Each is a great thinker who has consecrated the best of his life to the bringing together of the scientific conception of God made necessary by the mar-

vellous discoveries of this century, and the personal or spiritual conception of God made necessary by the demands of man's moral and spiritual life. Each of them is a "messenger, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man what is right for him" (Job xxxiii. 23), and to deliver the mind of the age from going down to the pit of doubt, despair, and cold denial. Their keynote is human nature as the interpretation of the divine nature. They are the great teachers of the higher, or spiritual anthropomorphism.

It might be hard for students of Browning's poetry to admit that agnosticism has seldom found so strong a statement as in his writings. Yet thoughtful attention to them will show that, within its rightful limits, he admits the absolute truth of the agnostic position. His longest poem, which may perhaps be called also the most characteristic, "The Ring and the Book," has, as its underlying idea, the im-

perfection of human judgment, the mystery of all life, and the impossibility of finding it out fully. In "Saul" we find clearly exposed the feeling of the agnostic as he gazes at life's revelation of the power back of phenomena; all knowledge shrivels and becomes worthless in the presence of the unfathomable reality of being. "Caliban upon Setebos" shows the same truth from the negative side, and with keenest satire. It ridicules crude anthropomorphism; its very motto, "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself," shows the trend of the whole. It is the sharpest criticism imaginable on those who think they know the whole divine nature, who view with complacency their little systems, as if they held the absolute truth of Deity. Only less strong in its sarcasm is "The Meditations of Johannes Agricola." No one could have written "Fears and Scruples" save one intimately conversant and

deeply sympathetic with the temper of the age. It is full of the modern question, "How do you know?"

But of all the poems of this great prophet, there is perhaps none which so strongly reflects the agnostic feeling of to-day as does the poem "La Saisiaz." Dealing as it does with the great question of personal immortality, it shows how supremely futile are all the attempts to prove scientifically this great fact; how analogies, fancies, hopes, while beautiful in themselves, and satisfying to some natures, fall far short of scientific proof. He leaves it as a hopeless mystery. He recognizes in the world his own soul as real, and a something outside, equally real, which might be readily and fully defined in the words of Spencer, "An infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed." Nothing else than this can be proved; and these cannot be proved; they are perceived.

"Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power
of proving proves them such:
Fact it is I know I know not something which is
fact as much.
What before caused all the causes, what effect
of all effects
Haply follows, — these are fancy. Ask the rush
if it suspects
Whence and how the stream which floats it had
a rise, and where and how
Falls or flows on still! What answer makes the
rush except that now
Certainly it floats and is, and, no less certain
than itself,
Is the every-way external stream that now through
shoal and shelf
Floats it onward, leaves it — maybe — wrecked
at last, or lands on shore
There to root again and grow and flourish stable
evermore.
— Maybe! mere surmise not knowledge: much
conjecture styled belief,
What the rush conceives the stream means
through the voyage blind and brief.
. . . . . .
Cause before, effect behind me — blanks! The
midway point I am,
Caused, itself — itself efficient: in that narrow
space must cram

All experience — out of which there crowds conjecture manifold,
But, as knowledge, this comes only — things may be as I behold,
Or may not be, but, without me and above me, things there are;
I myself am what I know not — ignorance which proves no bar
To the knowledge that I am, and, since I am, can recognize
What to me is pain and pleasure: this is sure, the rest — surmise.
If my fellows are or are not, what may please them and what pain, —
Mere surmise: my own experience — that is knowledge, once again!"

From it all comes no scientific proof of this great truth, but yet a conviction firm and strong and valid.

"Weakness never needs be falseness: truth is truth in each degree
— Thunder-pealed by God to Nature, whispered by my soul to me.
. . . . . .
So, I hope — no more than hope, but hope — no less than hope, because
I can fathom, by no plumb-line sunk in life's apparent laws,

How I may in any instance fix where change
should meetly fall,
Nor involve, by one revisal, abrogation of them
all.
. . . . . .
. . o'er our heaven again cloud closes, until,
lo —
Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to
pierce its gloom, compelled
By a power and by a purpose which, if no one
else beheld,
I behold in life, so — hope!"

Yet, in spite of all this allowance made to the agnostic, never was a soul more full of triumphant faith, never was a soul more free from the agnosticism which blights and saddens, than the soul of this English prophet. His every word is a message of faith, his every heart-beat a throb of hope and assurance. He faces life with absolute confidence that all is well. His subjective theology is as strong, as pronounced, as full, as any theologian could have the right to wish. He has a deeply rooted belief in all the great fun-

damentals of theological thought; in all which he has written there shines a sublime confidence in God as personal, as capable of communion with the heart of man, as loving and personal in that communion. There is a whole dogmatic theology in his writings. Where has calm trust in the beneficence of God and in the future ever found a better statement than in "Rabbi Ben Ezra"? Where has trust in the eternity of goodness and beauty, or personal reliance on God, ever found clearer expression than in the musings of Abt Vogler?

"Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;

> What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
> On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round."

What song of faith in the life beyond ever rang out so triumphant as the last word of this prophet? Would one want, or could one find, more profound, or truer grasp of the great Christian realities than in "Christmas Eve" and "Easter Day"? In "Bishop Blougram's Apology," that marvellous picture of the casuist, we find here and there touches of real thought and feeling, showing how deeply the mind and heart of this singer felt the need of faith as an element of man's life. God is unknowable, yes; but man must have some interpretation of that unknowable, or he will be restless, and fall into the blackness of darkness. He shows us what an element faith is in the make-up of a true man's life in "A Grammarian's Funeral."

"Others mistrust and say, 'But time escapes:
Live now or never!'
He said, 'What's time? Leave Now for dogs
and apes!
Man has Forever!'"

Too true a seer and thinker not to acknowledge the truth of the agnostic's position, Browning is also too true a prophet to rest with a mere negation; he must have, for himself and the world, a positive faith to supplement the negative, objective theology. But above all does he consecrate his deepest thought to the reconciliation of the two parts of theological thinking. He is a true theologian in that he cannot rest in two contradictory statements, but must seek their scientific harmony. In "Cleon," where the Greek philosopher scorns the idea that Jewish barbarians can have anything for the philosophers to learn, we see how something more than logic is necessary to form a theology. Browning is luminous with

the thought that, though God is unknowable, He must be interpreted in some way, and that the best and truest way is through a spiritual anthropomorphism. 'I have a right to interpret the infinite as like my best self," is the keynote of his deepest thinking and writing. In his poem "Epilogue," he pictures in the first division the subjective type of theology, in the second part the objective type of the present, and in the third, his reconciliation of them. David, in the first, tells of how the glory of the Lord filled the temple; then Renan asks, where is that glory now, how and why has it gone, shows the agnostic side, which ends with negation; and then the poet, in the third part, shows how the race has advanced to where it needs no outward manifestations, where the whole universe is the face of God. In "Saul," Browning eloquently shows the truth that in man's nature is the authority for the interpretation of the divine.

"Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at
Wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank,
to the Infinite Care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no more
and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God
is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul
and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever
renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending
upraises it too)
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's
all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his
feet.
Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity
known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift
of my own.

. . . . . .

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ulti-
mate gift,
That I doubt His own love can compete with it?
Here, the parts shift?

> Here, the creature surpass the Creator, — the end, what Began?
> Would I fain, in my impotent yearning, do all for this man,
> And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, Who yet alone can?"

In the "Death in the Desert" he points out how the miracles were needed as proofs at first, but the only abiding proof is man's nature. Browning recognizes the power of Christianity in meeting and reconciling the agnostic and the believer. He sees that it teaches a spiritual anthropomorphism, and that is what man needs. The fifth of "Ferishtah's Fancies" brings this out clearly. A Mohammedan friend comes to Ferishtah, the sage, and tells him that the man he saw him kicking and insulting was one who presumed to say that the Divine had taken human flesh, and was revealed as a man. Ferishtah proceeds to show that it is impossible for us to interpret God in any other way than under human conceptions and conditions,

and that yet we need some interpretation of Him. In estimating the cause of life's joy and good, that I may return thanks, I

> "Mount by just progression slow and sure
> To some prime giver . . . .
> Who takes my worship. Whom have I in mind,
> Thus worshipping, unless a man, my like
> Howe'er above me? Man, I say — how else,
> I being man who worship?
> . . . . . .
> . . . humanity like mine,
> Imagined, for the dear necessity,
> One moment in an object which the next
> Confesses unimaginable.
> . . . . . .
> . . The inconceivable
> Confessed by man — comprises, all the same,
> Man's every-day conception of himself —
> No less remaining unconceived!"

More rich is the Christian teaching of Saul. From his own nature he confidently affirms that of God, and declares that it is "his flesh" that he seeks in the Godhead, —

"'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

One more poem of Robert Browning's must be mentioned, for, more than any other, it brings out the way in which this spiritual anthropomorphism reconciles the agnostic mind and the craving heart. In "Christmas Eve," Browning laid hold on this problem and grappled with it with stupendous strength. Finding himself in a little chapel where anthropomorphic theology of the crudest type is being preached, ignorant, wild, rejected with scorn by thoughtful minds, he at last breaks away and finds under the stars his satisfying faith. He needs no forms

to give shape to his religion: the mere confession of the Unknowable satisfies him. But the vision of the Christ appears, and takes him first to the church of St. Peter's, and then to the lecture-room of a rationalistic critic. In each he sees the Master's promise fulfilled, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." From his anthropomorphism he has passed to the broadest thought. Yet he is taught as well that one needs a positive faith, which will be the best interpretation of God that soul can make. What is valuable in each of these different minds is not its form or the absence of it, but the fact that it is approaching God by the best way it knows.

> "Needs must there be one way, our chief
> Best way of worship: let me strive
> To find it, and when found, contrive
> My fellows also take their share!
> This constitutes my earthly care:
> God's is above it and distinct.

> For I, a man, with men am linked
> And not a brute with brutes; no gain
> That I experience, must remain
> Unshared: but should my best endeavor
> To share it, fail — subsisteth ever
> God's care above, and I exult
> That God, by God's own ways occult,
> May — doth, I will believe — bring back
> All wanderers to a single track."

Thus he passes from crude anthropomorphism through agnosticism to a spiritual anthropomorphism as the only satisfactory theology.

A profound study of "Christmas Eve" would prepare the student to grapple with the problems of present-day thought far more fully than would the study of many systems of philosophy.

We turn to the other great prophet of the day to find him pointing out to us, with equal clearness and positiveness, the same path as that which will lead to the harmony of knowledge and faith. Alfred Tennyson was sympathetic with the mind

of his time as few men have been, even among poets. Deeply religious by nature, yet a clear-eyed seer, and loyal above all to truth, he could not be anything else than a prophet of a religion that should harmonize with the conclusions of science relative to life. His poems, while the outspeaking of the mind and heart of the age, are not a mirror, they are a spiritual interpretation of the mind and heart of man. "In Memoriam," where we have the expression of the poet's own thought and feeling on the deepest subjects which concern human life, is of course the chief source of knowledge as to his faith; yet wherever his poems touch the problems of theology, they show that he feels the thraldom of the agnostic temper, realizes the deep need of faith if life is to be a spiritual reality, and finds the reconciliation between the religious instinct and the facts of science through faith as distinguished from science, that is, through a

spiritual anthropomorphism. "The Human Cry" may not be in form the height of poetry, but it sounds the depths of the heart of man to-day.

I.

"Hallowèd be Thy name — Halleluiah!
Infinite Ideality!
Unmeasurable Reality!
Infinite Personality!
Hallowèd be Thy name — Halleluiah!

II.

"We feel we are nothing — for all is Thou and in Thee;
We feel we are something — *that* also has come from Thee;
We are nothing, O Thou — But Thou wilt help us to be.
Hallowèd be Thy name — Halleluiah!"

He has the fullest sympathy for science and all its truths and teachings. He feels that the way of progress is through loyally following truth. Evolution is to him a

revelation of surpassing richness. His lines, "By an Evolutionist," show that he sees the truth of this deep principle, and as well that his prophet's soul discerns the spiritual meaning in it.

He sees the truth in agnosticism, and the folly and falsehood of those who uphold their subjective systems against the proved facts of science. The agnostic finds in Tennyson a sympathetic friend, albeit a friend who will not let him rest in negation, but leads him on to faith. What stronger statement of agnosticism could be found than the lines referring to the "Power not ourselves"?

> "That which we dare invoke to bless;
> Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
> He, They, One, All; within, without;
> The Power in darkness whom we guess."

Or the lines in the fifty-fifth section, where, speaking of the insight which science gives into nature, he cries, —

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all
And faintly trust the larger hope."

What does he show us as the testimony of nature?

"Thou makest thine appeal to me;
I bring to life, I bring to death;
The spirit does but mean the breath,
I know no more."

He sums up the inquiry after Nature's testimony,

"What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil."

What clearer statement was ever made of the unscientific character and necessary imperfection of subjective theology than in the familiar words, —

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

Truth must be a mystery so long as man is under his present limitations. It is

"The shadow cloaked from head to foot,
Who keeps the keys of all the creeds."

The very cry of the age sounds in the words, —

"Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

"So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry."

But stronger even than his sense of the hopelessness of a perfect creed based on knowledge, rises his sense of the reality and comfort and reliability of a creed

based on faith. His poems are full of faith in the great spiritual realities. "In Memoriam" throbs with it. Even "The Idyls of the King" have, as one of their chief motifs, the reality and power of faith. Arthur speaks of prayer in words dear to every religious nature, —

> "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

Even the mind tortured with doubt, and despairing of life,

> "Seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
> And through thick veils to apprehend
> A labor working to an end."

His faith in immortality, in the eternity of all that is pure and noble, is necessary to his very life.

> "Truth for truth, and good for good! the Good, the True, the Pure, the Just,
> Take the charm 'forever' from them, and they crumble into dust."

His strong faith that spoke out in the Prologue of "In Memoriam" speaks to us in his farewell song, where he tells us, spite of the darkness that shrouds our knowledge of the hereafter, —

> "I hope to see my Pilot face to face
> When I have crossed the bar."

Tennyson is a poet whom an agnostic might read with deepest reverence and love, feeling, Here is a man who sympathizes with me, who knows what doubt is, who realizes the imperfection of human reasoning, and the failure of dogmatic statement to satisfy the mind or heart of man. Tennyson is a poet whom a theologian might read with love and joy, feeling, Here is a man who knows what faith is, and who himself stakes his life on the truth of that which he believes. But each of them would say, if he read deeply and truly, Here is a man who shows to faith and knowledge their rightful and relative

places, — a man loyal at once to the facts of life and to the religious instinct; a man who can be a leader in the reconciliation of the sincere believer with the sincere doubter.

He points out the very way of reconciliation already indicated: through the admission of the absolute truth of agnosticism, but the equally positive statement of the need of an interpretation of God, and the truth that a spiritual interpretation of God, a representation in terms of man's highest, is valid, as the highest possible symbol. He interprets God through man.

In the exquisitely thoughtful poem, "Flower in the Crannied Wall," the poet says that, did he know all that is in the flower, he would know "what God and man is." An artistic mind, such as Tennyson's, could not say "what God and man *is*," without conceiving that the divine and human nature is the same. Man is what

God is, and in man we can find God. "A man . . . is then most Godlike being most a man." The heart, chilled with despair, recovers its faith through the sight of sweet human fellowship and love, in the close of "The Two Voices." In "The Higher Pantheism," which might have been well named "The Higher Anthropomorphism," we find these significant questions: —

"Is not the Vision He? though He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet —
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

"Law is God, say some; no God at all, says the fool;
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool.

"And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision — Were it not He?"

The spiritual anthropomorphism, which is the secret of true theology, could hardly be better taught than in the words the Ancient Sage gives to the young agnostic,

"If thou wouldst hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, though thou canst not know."

Further, dealing with the question of proof for the personality of the divine, the old sage says,—

"Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,

. . . . . .

For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven; wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith."

It is in man and his nature that this prophet sees the image of God, the true representation of God whom we are to worship and serve and love.

"Only That which made us, meant us to be
mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens
within the human eye,

"Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless,
through the human soul,
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless out-
ward, in the Whole.

. . . . . .

"Follow you the Star that lights a desert path-
way, yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature
is divine."

In these few verses just quoted are Christianity, agnosticism, and their reconciliation.

Through the Prologue to "In Memoriam," ripest thought and feeling of the great prophecy, rings a note of trium-

phant faith in Christianity as the true religion, because it is a spiritual anthropomorphism, representing God in terms of the highest in man. No words could more clearly indicate the path religion must take to be at once loyal to the truths of science and the needs of man's religious nature.

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

. . . . . .

"Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou:
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

"We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

"But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear:
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light."

There is one section of "In Memoriam" which gives, with beauty and truth such as none but a prophet could employ, the relation of science and faith, and the refuge afforded man by his own nature from the cruel hopelessness of science. It is part cxxiv., the first stanza of which we have already quoted, —

"That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

"I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor thro' the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun:

"If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

"A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

"No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamor made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

"And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men."

God, who cannot be found by searching, is seen in our own nature; our love, our personality, is the highest image of His Infinite Nature.

Where can the thoughtful mind of today, torn and confused between the rival claims of science and faith, knowing that

loyalty to fact is the first duty of man, yet conscious that the soul needs something to rest on with confidence, find a prayer so helpful, so voicing its deepest yearning, as the close of this great prophecy?

"O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure,

"That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto Him that hears,
A cry above the conquer'd years
To one that with us works, and trust

"With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul."

Such are the leaders God has sent to show His church the way of truth and faith. The Christian thinker who walks

in the path they show him may be sure that he is in the way that leads to the light, for he is following men who have been taught of Christ, and have been sent by Him to be our guides.

XI

MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE TWO TYPES

If the thought of the foregoing essays has been expressed with any clearness at all, it will be necessary to make only the briefest statement of the consequences of the position here taken. I have tried to show, in short, that the agnostic holds an unassailable position when he states that God cannot be known by the human mind with absolute certainty, with any greater definiteness than as the "Infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed," and "which makes for righteousness;" that even this definition is too definite, is a use of terms to define the undefinable; the absolute truth being that God is unknow-

able. But these essays have attempted to show as well that the Christian believer holds a position equally impregnable when he states that the human race cannot live and make progress without that exercise of the religious instinct which may be loosely termed *faith*; and that a spiritual anthropomorphism is valid, scientific, and worthy of respect, being the best possible interpretation of an inexpressible reality.

From this view of the two conflicting forces, which we may call the agnostic's and the theologian's, there flow certain consequences, which, were they apprehended and used, would undoubtedly bring nearer together the honest men of both sides who distrust each other, and would make, if not a peace, yet at least a truce during which conditions of peace might be discussed, between the two long contending parties in the "warfare of science and religion."

Look first at some of the consequences

to the agnostic. There lies upon him most of all, if he sees in the way of harmony here indicated the way of truth, the obligation to respect the authority of the domain of faith, and not to intrude upon it with claims of the authority of science; to recognize that, while science may and must make her own estimate of the character of the reality which is in and behind all phenomena, and may rightly insist that no other conception shall thrust itself into her work, there is a sphere where that conception cannot claim sovereignty and sole right, where a more clearly defined conception is needed and valid.

This is not to hold that there is any sphere of knowledge in which the laws of human reasoning are put aside or set at defiance; we have indicated plainly the scientific basis of theology. All that we hold as a consequence is that the agnostic should not dogmatize in the sphere of reli-

gion by attempting to limit it to the scientific conception of God, when it is evident that a further definition is needed.

Much of the friction which has been produced up to this time would disappear did the agnostic but acknowledge this one obligation and act upon it. There has been too great a tendency, due to a natural rebound, perhaps, for the agnostic scientist to sneer at the theologian for his anthropomorphism, not seeing that his own definition of God is anthropomorphic, and that, as a rigid matter of fact, he is reduced to a choice of three courses, — to leave God absolutely undefined, a course which cuts all religion out of man's life; to interpret God in terms of known material existence, a retrogression to outgrown and pernicious types of theology; or to interpret God in terms of known spiritual existence, a course which has its dangers, no doubt, but which is the only legitimate one to take. Matthew Arnold's

contempt for those whose conception of God is of an "infinitely extended Lord Shaftesbury" is superficial and unworthy; for his own definition of God is simply spiritual anthropomorphism; and once granted that God must be interpreted at all, and that it must be in terms of human spirit, the tendency to find an image of God in every ideal or idealized human spirit is right and true. So long as the theologians bring into their conception of God only that which is ideal and best in the human spirit, they are within their rights; and the most vigorous agnostic must, if he would be logical, either acknowledge this, and allow to theology its representation of God as an ideal human spirit, or he must deny that any representation of God is possible, this denial carrying with it the further denial that there can be any valid religion; in which case he must hold that the admittedly greatest force in human progress is a delusion.

That religion has a function to discharge in human society cannot be questioned by any: does not this carry with it the fact that some interpretation of God is necessary?

With this obligation there rests on the agnostic the further one of acknowledging the necessity of theology, and the validity of subjective theology, of the type here defined as spiritual anthropomorphism. It is not enough that he should allow the theologian to go on his way, saying, I have nothing to do with you, nor you with me; our paths do not cross. Neither let him say, Those who want to speculate may do so; I confine myself to facts. For there lies upon him, as a student of nature and of man, the necessity of accounting for, in some way, this religious nature which has played a part so mighty in the progress of history. Too much of late years the agnostic scientist has ignored the religious element of life. It rests upon him as a

duty to admit the unmistakable fact that religion is among the greatest forces in human progress, and that religion must therefore have in it something which he is bound to respect. In short, it is right that the theologian should demand of him that he pay homage to faith as one of the sovereigns of man's life.

He must admit the validity of spiritual anthropomorphism; he must acknowledge that, though God be inexpressible, man must have a working hypothesis, and that such a representation can be made only in terms of human nature, the human spirit.

But the agnostic is not the only sinner, or the only one who must revise his thoughts and alter his course, in the interests of truth and harmony. If the position taken in these essays has in it any truth, then are there consequences flowing from it to the theologian, obligations resting upon him to which he must

submit with good grace as the demands of truth.

An obligation rests upon him corresponding to that which we have found confronting the agnostic, that he shall respect the sovereignty of science, and not intrude on her sphere or her work with conclusions held by subjective theology, or insist that the work or results of science shall be bounded or judged by the theological conception of God.

How much of the bitter strife between religion and science through the ages past has been due to the fact that theologians have insisted that the dogmas of subjective theology should have authority to modify or deny the conclusions of science! As scientific study has expanded the field of things known, and lessened the domain of speculation, every advance has been bitterly fought by the men who, rightly contending that dogma is supreme in the sphere of speculation, could not, or would

not, see that wherever science set her sure foot the territory passed from the sovereignty of theology to that of science.

A great modification has taken place in the attitude of the theologian towards the scientist. He is not so ready as in past days to assert the authority of theology in the sphere of science, yet there is still need of growth. It is not many years since theologians were denouncing the principle of evolution because it was said to be inconsistent with the first chapters of Genesis, or with the Christian conception of the personality of God. The tendency is still strong to dogmatize in the scientific sphere, to oppose all scientific statements which conflict with the positions of subjective theology. This kind of defence of theology is doomed to certain defeat, for it is unrighteous. Supreme in her own sphere, subjective theology is impotent in the sphere of science. The scientist is met on the

borders of the domain of faith with the legend, "We walk by faith, not by sight," which at once renders him powerless; the theologian is equally met by the legend, "We walk by sight, not by faith," when he attempts to invade the sphere of science with his dogmatic statements. The fish insists that water is the element of life, and that unless the bird comes and lives in the water, the bird does not know what life is. But the bird insists that the air alone is the principle of life and that the fish must interpret all the facts of existence in terms of air-life. Each is wrong through treating a half-truth as if it were the whole truth.

The theologian must absolutely respect the right of science to be agnostic. He must demand of the scientist no recognition of God in his study of nature beyond the perception of Him as the Reality behind all phenomena, which produces a tendency towards righteousness.

But another and a weightier obligation rests on the believer; it is the obligation to make constant progress in the spiritualizing of his theological conceptions. From the very nature of the case theology never can be cast in a permanent shape. It must change as the science of the time changes, and still more as the nature of man becomes more thoroughly understood. We have already spoken of the process called by Mr. John Fiske "deanthropomorphization," and have taken a glance at the way in which it has gone on refining the theological conceptions of the Unseen, not making them less anthropomorphic, but changing their anthropomorphism more and more from a physical to a spiritual ideal. This process must be allowed to have its perfect work, until, as man finds out more and more surely the truth about his own spiritual nature, and as the glory of the spiritual shines brighter in contrast with the physi-

cal, he may come at last to the conception of the "perfect man," which will be "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," the most perfect possible representation of the Unsearchable God.

Perhaps it is necessary to say (though it should not be) that this progress need not be feared by the orthodox believer, who loves and cherishes his Bible, as if it were a departing from the teaching of that Book, a leaving of it behind that we may take other guides. Nothing can be surer than that the Bible must ever remain the religious and theological textbook of the race; that no advance in knowledge can ever cause man to outgrow it; that it must always be what it has always been, the one reliable, satisfying revelation of God to man. In itself it is an epitome of the struggle of man up to a spiritual conception of Deity. Its conception of God is always in terms of human nature, and its ideal, at first

containing many physical elements, and mental qualities not of the highest, becomes purified as each age develops it, as each prophet expands it, until it is gathered up in a perfect man, a pure spiritual nature. The Ideal Man must be the perfect representation of God; in that simple fact lies the assurance that all our study and searching will never take us beyond the Bible as our supreme religious authority, or beyond Jesus as our supreme revelation of God, the object of our adoration and our service.

Yet theology must make progress or stand discredited. Especially must the theologian push strongly and penetrate as far as life allows into two great fields, psychology and sociology. He must find his way to a perfect theology through obedience to the old command, "Know thyself," and must make the sciences which deal with *humanity*, especially with the spiritual nature of the human being,

the basis of his theories, the guides of his progress. His theology must become more and more spiritual. The emphasis must be on the inner rather than the outer part of the facts at the basis of Christianity, on Christian *truths* even more than on Christian *facts*. It must be such progress as Robert Browning teaches in the guise of John, the beloved disciple:

"I cried once, 'that ye may believe in Christ,
Behold, this blind man shall receive his sight!'
I cry now, 'Urgest thou, *for I am shrewd*
And smile at stories how John's word could cure —
Repeat that miracle and take my faith?'
I say, that miracle was duly wrought
When, save for it, no faith was possible.
Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,
Whether the change came from our minds which see
Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
Than God wills for His purpose, — . .
. . — I know not; such was the effect,
So faith grew, making void more miracles
Because too much: they would compel, not help.

I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?"

We must see more and more that theology deals not with the absolute, but with symbols; that it is bounded not by the truth in the object but by the power of the human mind to conceive of that object; that its symbols are nevertheless trustworthy, because they express what man must think and conceive of the Infinite; that with increasing knowledge of the spirit of man must come an increasingly spiritual conception of God; that even the fulness of the revelation of God, for which we wait, will show us that we are "like Him," that we, when perfect, when we have attained our ideal, shall, in that very ideal, "see Him as he is."

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